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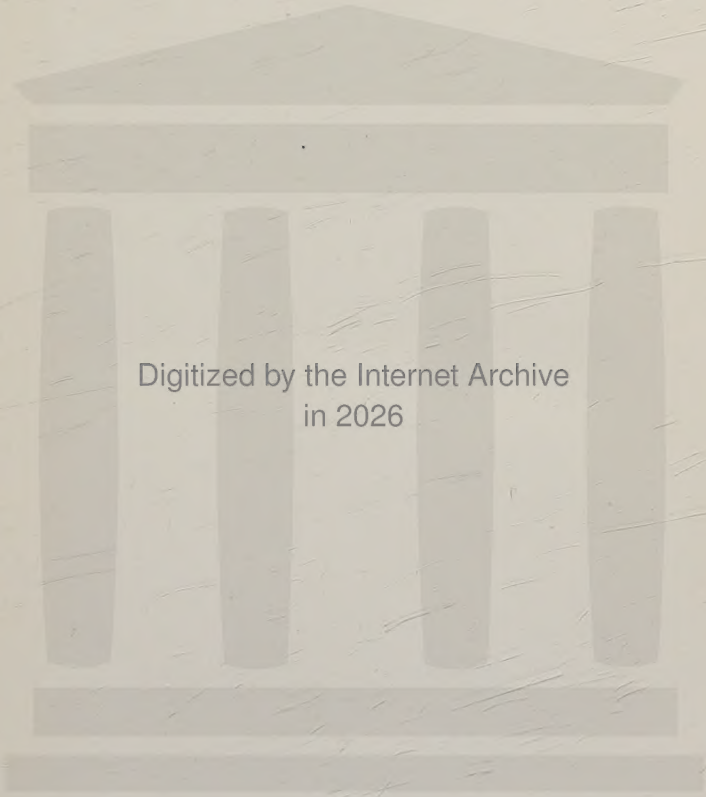
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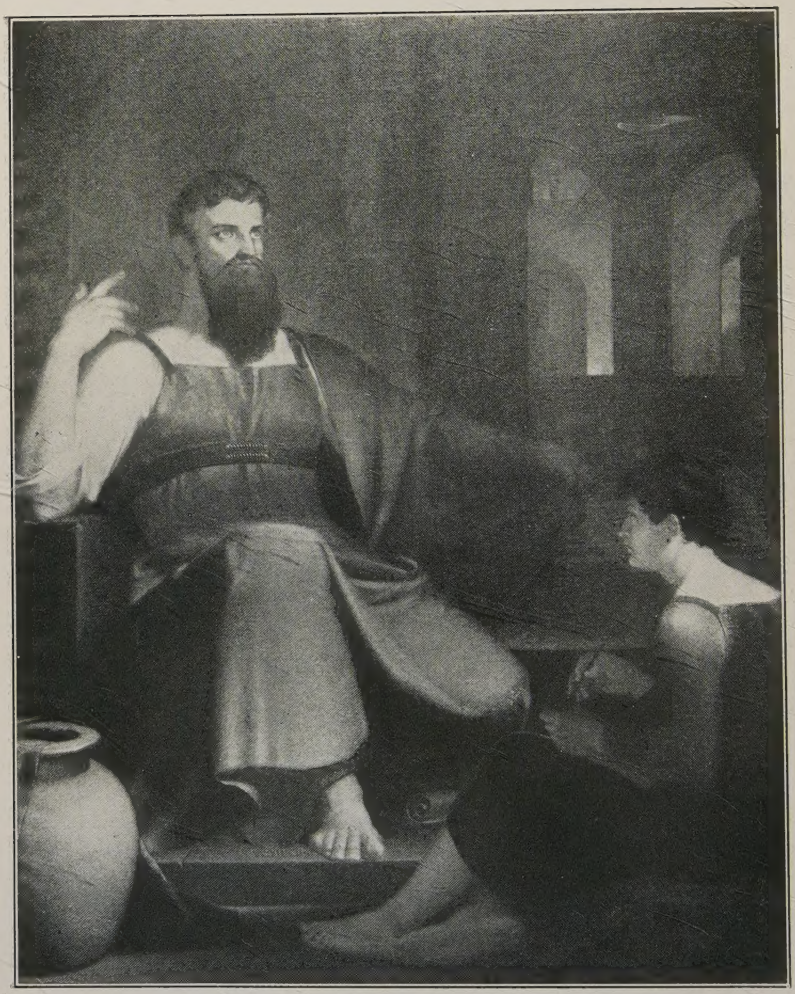

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TARBELL'S
TEACHERS' GUIDE

TO THE
INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS
FOR 1911

MARTHA TARBELL, Ph. D.

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Suggestions for Teaching the Lessons. The Historical Books: First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The Prophetical Books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, Malachi. Chronology: Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah; Important Dates after the Exile; Last Kings of The Assyrian Empire; Kings of the New Babylonian Empire; Kings of the Persian Empire.

Bible Text. Home Readings. Words and Phrases Explained. Suggestive Thoughts from Helpful Writers. Light from Oriental Life. Historical Background. Geographical Background.

Suggestions to Teachers of Little Folks. Suggestions for Beginning the Lesson: For Younger Pupils; For Older Pupils. Three Lesson Topics, with Illustrations. Sentence Sermons. The Lesson's Meanings for Us. The Lesson Briefly Told. Subjects for Bible Classes. Work to be Assigned: Questions to look up; Questions to think about; Written Work.

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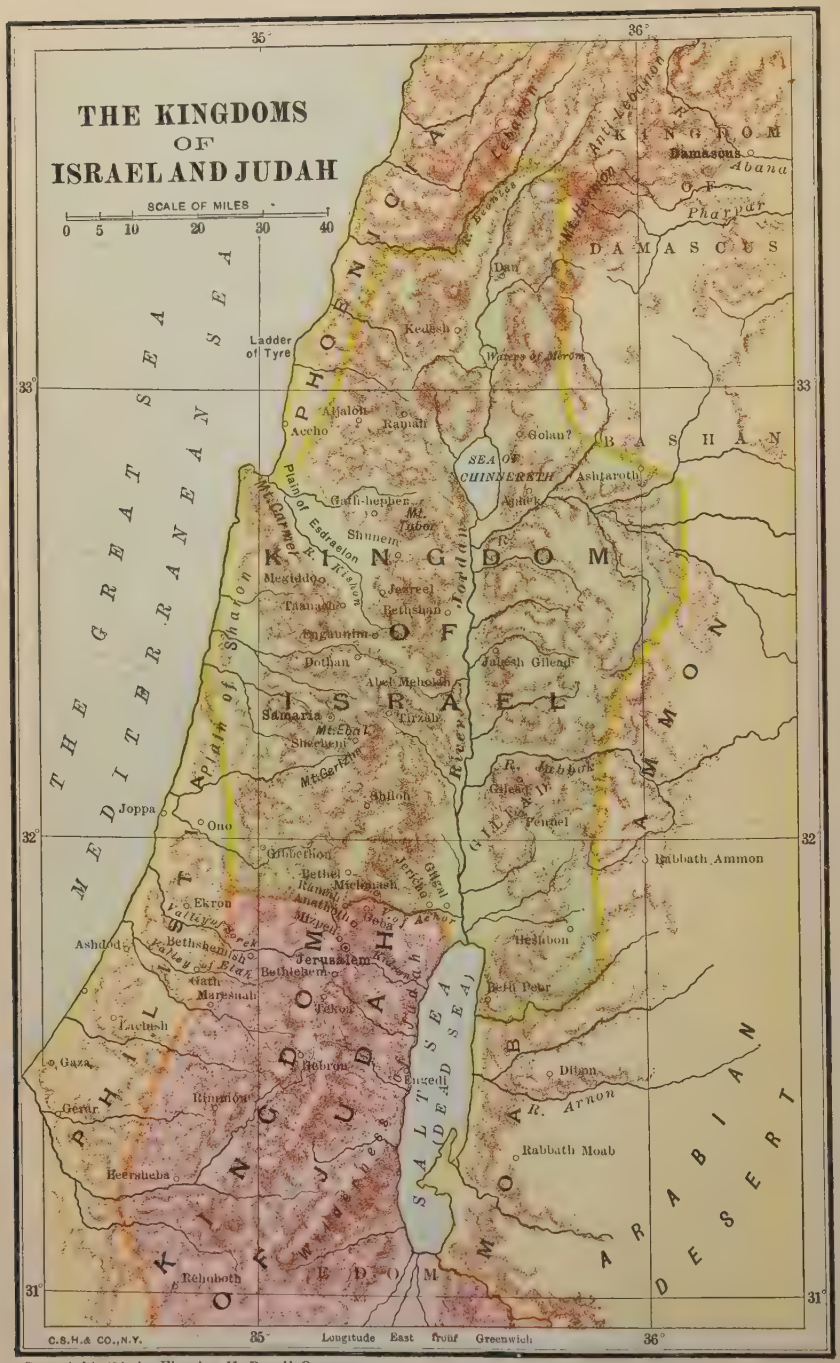

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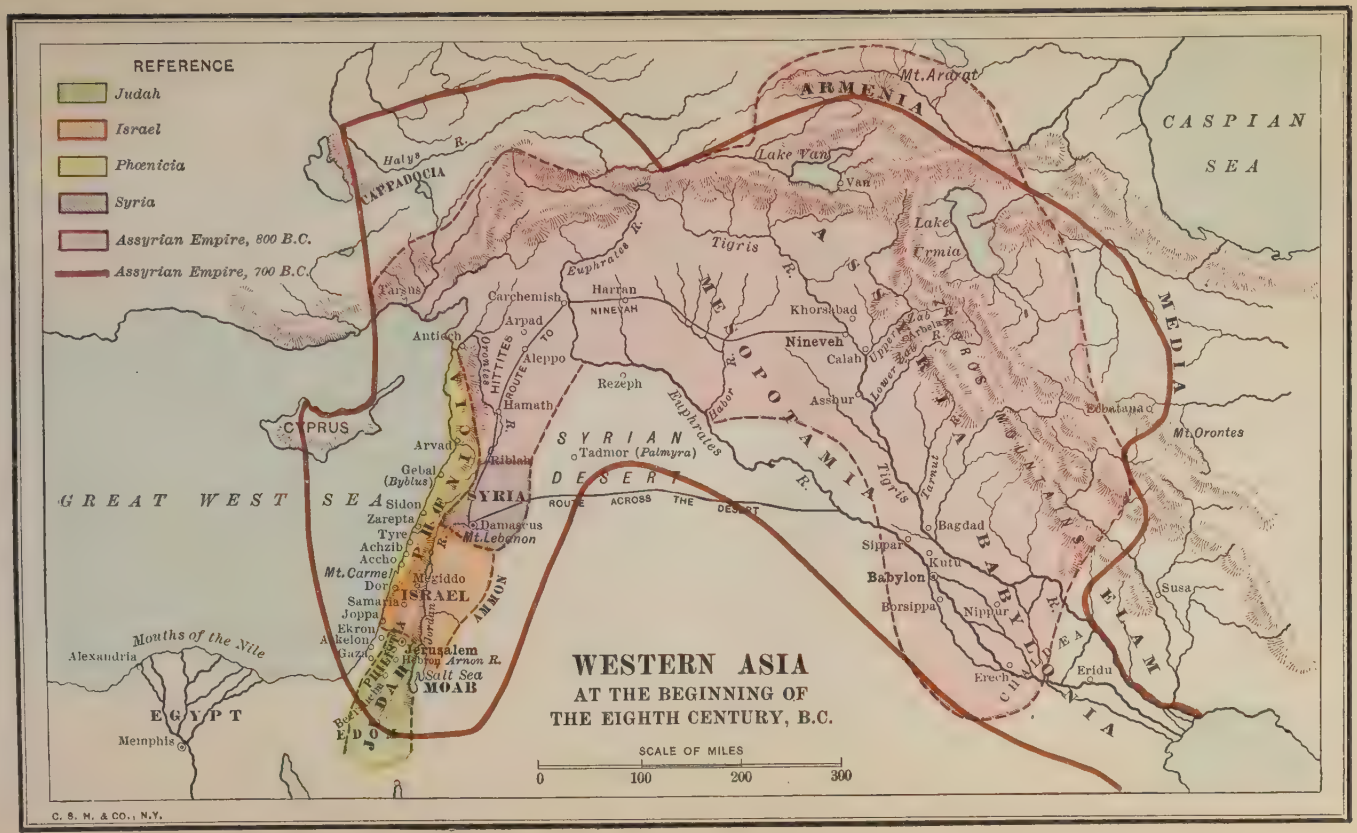

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TARBELL'S TEACHERS' GUIDE

TO THE

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS

FOR 1911

INTRODUCTION

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

The Course of Lessons. Great is our country in realm and resources. prosperity and prospects. What was its condition when John Smith came to Virginia? It is a far cry from the now to the then. But is there for us therefore no interest nor profit in knowing what John Smith found here, what the Pilgrim Fathers found, through what struggles our nation has passed, and by what efforts it has gained its present proud position?

Jesus Christ arose from the dead and brought life and immortality to light. Why was the kingdom of Solomon divided? Here we have the same harking back to crude beginnings, as we turn from our year's study of the life of Jesus, which culminated in His death and resurrection, to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and trace their downward course till only exile could prepare the Hebrew nation for His coming. We turn back from God's full revelation of Himself in Jesus the Christ to His gradually increasing revelation of Himself in the time of the kings and the prophets, and a most profitable study for us is this of the steps by which the knowledge of His righteousness and of His ways came to His chosen people.

The Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus Christ. Even as He turned from services that fulfilled the letter but not the spirit of worship and scorned the man-made precepts of the Pharisees, so would He have turned from the Law and the Prophets had He not known that they are invaluable for the spiritual life of humanity in all ages. Throughout our lessons for this year we have seen how familiar He was with the Old Testament, how applicable He found it for the need of the moment, how often He quoted from it to enforce His teaching, how expressly He said that He had come to fulfil it, accepting its history as a preparation for Himself and teaching His disciples to recognize Him in it. And is this not authority for us? We have seen, too, how He obtained from it food for His own spiritual life. And shall not we obtain it, too?

As teachers do we know our Old Testament books as we should? Do our pupils, of whatever grade, know them?

In a recent entrance examination of a hundred young men for Mount Hermon School these questions were given, which are covered by our year's course: What happened after Solomon's death and why? Answered correctly by only five out of the hundred. Name three of the best kings and two of the greatest prophets of Judah. Answered correctly by only two. How did the Northern Kingdom end? The Southern? Why? Not one could answer these questions. Name three men who had most to do with the return of the Jews from Babylon, and tell what each did. Only two named Ezra and only two named Nehemiah. Such answers as these were handed in:

"Peter, Levi, and Apollos;" "Jesus, Paul, Simon;" "The King of Babylon, Solomon, and ———." Twice a year similar examinations are given to entering students at Mount Hermon, and the results vary very little, it is said. These questions are included in the last review lesson in this Guide. What shall be the proportion of correct answers in your class?

The year's lessons cover a period that was of great importance to the Hebrew people, a time of training and of sifting, when they were learning hard lessons which we in this day are still trying to learn. How modern is the first lesson with its suggested topics so numerous that it is difficult to select the most important—arrogance, bragging, unwillingness to take advice from wiser heads, selfishness, shortsightedness, injustice, tyranny, divine right of kings, right of taxation, the need of high wisdom in high places! And so every lesson has its warning against some unrighteousness current in lives of to-day, or some example that spurs us on to right thinking or right acting. As Dr. G. Stanley Hall says, the Old Testament is from beginning to end one long and impressive argument in favor of the practical wisdom of righteousness as a condition of personal welfare and national stability.

"I think I know my Bible as few literary men know it," Hall Caine, the novelist, writes in *McClure's Magazine*. "There is no book in the world like it, and the finest novels ever written fall short in interest of any one of the stories it tells." No teacher need have the slightest difficulty in interesting his class in the stories of this course. True, once when our lessons were selected from the historical books of Kings and Chronicles complaints were made such as this voiced by Dr. Wm. R. Richards in one of his books: "We had been studying the lives of a series of bad men; and when we had learned about one of them it appears that we had learned nearly all there was to tell worth telling about all of them. It was nearly the same lesson Sunday after Sunday, only with a different name for the king." That complaint cannot be made in regard to the lessons selected this year, for they are full of stirring and most varied incidents. Only Lessons III to V of the First Quarter might be treated alike, and even here there is no need of such treatment.

Adapted for All Grades. Is this course too difficult for the Primary Grades? What could be better adapted for primary pupils than the stories about Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and Daniel, the theme of thirteen lessons, or one-fourth of the year's work? The second year's work of the Graded Primary Lessons includes three other lessons that are in our uniform course this year: Joash repairing the temple, Nehemiah the king's cup-bearer, and Ezra teaching the Law. There are but two or three lessons in our entire year's course not equally well adapted as the basis for primary instruction.

Will teachers in the Junior Grade find this course adapted to their pupils? The Divided Kingdom, Captivity, and Return is the theme chosen by the framers of the Graded Series for the third year of the Junior course. If adapted for eleven-year-olds is it not also for ten-year-olds and twelve-year-olds?

A comparison of our course with that of the Graded Intermediate Course shows that thirteen of our lessons are included in its first year work. We have four lessons from the prophet Isaiah; the graded course has but one. The Biblical material assigned for that one lesson is Chapter 1, verses 1-20; all of chapter 6; chapter 7, verses 1-9; chapter 8, verse 21 to chapter 9, verse 7; and all of chapter 39. If that lesson can be taught, may not our four lessons about Isaiah's call to service with its application "Here am I; send me;" his parable of the Vineyard with its lesson about disappointing God; his prophecy concerning Sennacherib with our Golden Text that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" and his words about the "Suffering Servant of Jehovah" with its application to Jesus the Christ? In the Graded Course there is but one lesson from Jeremiah. The material assigned is chapter 1, verses 1-19; chapter 39, verses 1-18; chapter 40, verses 1-6; chapter 42, verses 1-22; chapter 43, verses 1-7; chapter 45, verses 1 to 5, and chapter 31, verses 31-34. We have four lessons from the Book of Jeremiah: his Trial and Acquittal; the Burning of his Roll by Jehoiakim; his Being Cast into Prison; and the account of Judah carried into Captivity. All of the year's lessons are admirable for Intermediate scholars.

The Graded work for the Senior and Advanced Grades has not yet been issued, but certainly they may wisely include the Divided Kingdom, Captivity, and Return.

In writing each lesson here given I have kept in mind the requirements and needs of teachers in all grades from the Primary upward, and all teachers will find material especially adapted to his pupils' stage of development.

A Word of Caution. You will read in the course of this year's lessons about the wholesale slaughter of priests of Baal, about the killing of innocent children with their parents, about bitter requests for divine vengeance on enemies. Teachers of young pupils will, of course, omit these statements altogether. Teachers of older classes will make sure that their pupils do not regard the Old Testament in just the same light as the New. They will teach that while our standard is the teaching of Christ, the Old Testament standard was less enlightened; that while the leaders in Old Testament times were sincere seekers after a knowledge of God, and were in true communion with Him, God had not revealed Himself to them as fully as He afterwards did to the world in His son Jesus Christ.

Your Part and Mine. An unsuccessful minister once asked Dr. Joseph Parker why he failed to get a church. Dr. Parker told him to preach to him and the minister complied. "Now I can tell you why you cannot get a church," the Doctor promptly announced. "For the last half hour you have been trying, not to get something into my mind, but something off yours." There is danger that teachers may try to get off their minds what they have read in the Guide, whereas their task is a very different one, that of getting into their pupils' minds what their own thought and study as well as the reading of the Guide have shown them their pupils need.

From the material here furnished you must select and adapt. There is more than enough material in each lesson treatment for pupils of your grade as well as food for thought: what is to your purpose, knowing the development and needs of your pupils as you do, only you can tell. Be not guilty of dealing in the indefinite article; teach not *a* lesson but *the* lesson prompted by your own individuality and the individualities of your pupils.

Nestor's well-known word to the Greeks is my word to you: the secret of victory is in getting a good ready. Men and women who "mean well" cannot teach successfully unless they also know well. The Chinese word picture for the verb *to know* consists of the word for *arrow* and the word for *mouth*: it means that he who knows can speak to the point, just as an arrow flies straight to its mark! Whether or not you can speak to the point depends largely upon the time and thought you have given to prepare yourself for speaking. In the words of Dr. Alexander Maclaren: I know no way in which we can do our work well but through quiet fellowship with God, resolute keeping up of the student's habits, and conscientious preparation. The secret of success in everything is trust in God and hard work.

The time to begin your study of next week's lesson is the day you have taught this one. The way to absorb that lesson is to read the whole text over every day during the week. Make notes as you study. If you have the lesson theme thoroughly in mind illustrations and helpful thoughts will come to you unexpectedly: do not fail to jot them down at the time they visit you.

It is bad to get into a rut, says Mark Twain, but it is worse to wabble all over the road. A teacher sometimes wabbles all over the road from lack of full preparation. He has learned where the ruts are, he knows the character and direction of the road-bed, the soil and flowers along the sides as well, but he has not mapped out his course, is not intent on getting anywhere, and he is drawn from one side to the other with no definite aim. An outline or plan is essential in Sunday-school instruction. It is well to write the outline, for in doing this you fix it in mind, but, if possible, commit it to memory. The children of this world are often wiser than the children of light. The printed selling instructions for a house-to-house canvas of a certain article that I chanced to see to-day is headed thus: "To be learned word for word by a new demonstrator and so well that she can say it while employing her hands and watching prospective buyer's face." Is not this what the teacher needs to do? You must look your pupils in the eye as you teach, but if you find it impossible to memorize your outline or plan for teaching for the

day, an occasional reference to your written outline in class will be far better than having to grope about in your mind for your plan of procedure. Consciousness that you know your aim and the steps by which you will reach it alone can give you mastery.

The Introduction to This Guide. Each part of the Scripture is to be read with the same spirit wherewith it was written, long ago Thomas à Kempis discovered. To understand the historical and prophetical books of this year's course it is especially necessary to get the writers' viewpoints.

Each book has not only its own historical setting but its own spirit. Dr. Henry van Dyke has this striking sentence in "A Writer's Request of His Master:" Teach me to see the local color without being blind to the inner light: give me an ideal that will stand the strain of weaving into human stuff on the loom of the real. Was he thinking of the prophetical writers whose works we study this year? Certainly this is what they have done, and we should seek to grasp their vision of local color and inner light.

Read each book in the course through as a whole, if possible at one time, to get its "atmosphere," to learn both what it contains and what it does not contain. After making your own independent study of a book as a whole, read the discussion of that book given here in the Introduction. Teach most of this information to older pupils. Make them familiar with the place of each book in the Bible, its place in the history, and the place within each book of its most important teachings; its plan and its purpose. It would be a good plan to give each pupil a typewritten or mimeograph copy of the paragraphs as they are called for in work assigned.

A Bible Study leader has awakened many college students to their need of greater familiarity with the Bible by asking them to find the book of Hezekiah without using the index. In a class of thirteen Harvard men he found every one certain that in five minutes he could achieve this impossibility. It has been claimed that the Uniform Lessons fail to give pupils any conception of the character and contents of the Books of the Bible. Our carefully wrought plan of lessons, with the prophetical messages inserted in their connection with the historical books, gives opportunity this year for a mastery of many books. Do not fail to grasp it for yourselves and for classes old enough to take this work.

The Text and Home Readings. The lesson in the 1909 course was about the Philippian Jailer. The lesson writer in one of our leading denominational teacher's journal began his exposition of the lesson with these words: "The lesson committee would have the study begin with Paul and Silas in prison. But how did they come to be in prison?" and then he went back to verses 16-18 of that chapter and explained the reason for the imprisonment. Yet only the Golden Text stood between his assertion about the lesson committee and the reference to Acts 16.16-40, the actual lesson selected by the lesson committee, which he had placed at the head of his discussion! The verses for printing, it is true, were limited to 25-40, as it is usual for convenience to assign the kernel of the whole only, but the whole text necessary to an understanding of the whole theme is always given by the lesson committee, and is always taught in "The Guide." Do not fail to study the whole lesson, and to have your pupils do this also.

The Home Daily Bible Readings given in this "Guide" are selected by the Sunday-school Editorial Association and approved by the American Section of the International Sunday-school Committee. No teacher can afford to miss the light these Bible Readings throw upon the Sunday-school lessons.

Words and Phrases Explained. Old Testament lessons need more explanation than the New. The effort here has been to explain only what needs explaining, passing by without comment what is self-evident to all, but dodging no important questions and giving the relevant explanations clearly and concisely. Teachers are naturally tempted to omit this study of words and phrases as drudgery, especially if their pupils are young and they cannot teach the full meaning of the text. But all careful study of the lesson text has rich rewards for the teacher himself. As Bishop Phillips Brooks beautifully says: A text which we have once studied is like a star upon which we have once looked through a telescope. We always see it afterwards, full of the brightness and color which that look showed us. Even if it grows dim behind a

cloud, or other nearer stars seem to outshine it, we never think it dull or small after we have once looked deep into its depths.

Suggestive Thoughts from Helpful Writers. Just as a lawyer studies the opinions of legal authorities who have gone over the ground before him, while at the same time giving his own independent study to the question in hand, so the teacher should profit from the words of great thinkers and writers in his field of labor. What is commonplace or well-known is not given here. This section in "The Guide" is intended chiefly for teachers of older pupils, but all teachers will gain from it right viewpoints which they should not miss.

Light from Oriental Life. Under this heading is included not only the helpful sidelights thrown upon the lesson by the manner of thinking and living in oriental lands, but also the information given by recent discoveries of inscriptions from Assyria and papyri from Egypt. Pick and shovel in those lands are constantly illumining and confirming the Bible records.

The Historical Background. "This is not a real school," candidly wrote a boy in an account of his Sunday-school. There are hosts of Sunday-schools where this is the honest opinion of the boys and girls. Are they thinking this in your school? If so, one reason may be because you are not teaching the lesson as actual history. Without a knowledge of the historical setting pupils above the Primary Grade are dealing with the land of the unrealized and inoperative, to use a choice phrase of Lecky's.

Read the Historical Background, from the call of Abraham to the division of the Kingdom, given in connection with the first lesson till it recalls clearly to your mind the whole situation, the place of this year's records in the life of the Hebrew nation. Tell this to your pupils on the first Sunday. Connect each week's lesson with the preceding lesson. In "The Guide" is given the history necessary to a right understanding of every lesson in its relation to what comes before and after, and with it is also connected world events that tend to make the Biblical history real.

Take a few moments often to recall in class the general trend of events from the division of the Kingdom to whatever lesson is being studied before the fall of Samaria; from that point onward to the fall of Jerusalem; from the exile to the close of the Old Testament period.

In the Introduction chronological tables are given, for you will often find it convenient to refer to them, but do not have your pupils learn lists of kings and dates. Make them familiar with the important kings, their deeds, and general position in the roll of the kingdom, but do not waste time teaching the whole list—there is too much of far greater importance to be gained in this year's work.

The Geographical Background. Studying a lesson in this course without paying heed to the historical setting is as if a foreigner should study Lincoln's Gettysburg speech without knowing anything about the Civil War, and studying these lessons without regard to their geographical setting is as if that foreigner had no knowledge of the geography of the United States.

Suggestions to Teachers of Little Folks. When ten years of age, Dr. Rufus M. Jones, the President of Haverford College, read the Bible through. Daniel and Esther were the books he liked best. "I knew intimately all the details of their experiences," he tells us, "but the prophets were far above me. Elijah and Elisha were all right, but the ones who wrote did not speak to my condition. I knew it must all be wonderful and I believed that they were speaking for God, but I did not understand what they meant."

Our lessons about Elijah and Elisha, Daniel and Jonah and Esther are fascinating lessons for ten-year-olds and younger. They are "truths embodied in a tale," and your task with these lessons is a simple one. To master each story you will find it helpful to go over it every day of the week preceding, telling it aloud to yourself, so that when the lesson period comes you can rivet the attention of your little people as you talk.

While no child of ten or younger can himself read and understand the prophets who wrote, you can make our lessons from these prophets as understandable and as speaking to their condition as others whom Dr. Jones mentions, if you are ready to take the trouble. Dr. G. Stanley Hall, President of Worcester University, well says: "Any one who ever saw Professor Huxley talk to his own children would realize that there was not a thing

which that great mind knew in science, that he could not make fascinating to the little child. And so it is in religion."

Your task is not to give the whole lesson text, nor a logical, connected treatment. The historical background you will, of course, not teach. Details of the historical lessons it is often wise for you to omit, and sometimes it will be a very small part of the text on which you will base your teaching. Because time and thought must be given to the right way of presenting some of the Old Testament lessons, I have added to "The Guide" this year a department especially for you, in the hope that the suggestions there given with each lesson may prove helpful.

Suggestions for Beginning and Ending the Lesson. It is said that a ten-penny nail will hold stationary the most powerful locomotive ever built, if it blocks the wheel before the locomotive gets started. But let the iron monster once get under way, and a whole hardware store of ten-penny nails could not stop it. A wise teacher in preparing his lesson always makes sure that he well knows how he is going to get under way. Little things easily disturb the attention of pupils at the beginning if the teacher's introductory words do not impel them to pay heed. Possibly you have a courteous class that always listens. But do they give attention as well? The two are not synonymous. Listening depends upon the pupil. Giving attention depends upon the teacher. Always come prepared to begin the lesson period in such a way that you will at once interest your pupils and impel them to give attention to what you are saying and are going to say.

Two suggestions for beginning the lesson are given in "The Guide," but it is not possible to give suggestions for closing the lesson, as what is fitting for the close depends wholly upon the way in which the lesson has been treated. The impression and lasting influence of the whole lesson may be lost by a careless or dull or flippant closing. As careful as you are to begin the lesson aright, so careful should you be to end it aright.

Lesson Topics.

> Let's carry with us ears and eyes for the time,
> But hearts for the event,

is Shakespeare's counsel that we need to heed in this year's course of study. Eyes and ears attentive to the explanations, history and geography, the orientalisms, that we may study and teach intelligently, but hearts attentive to the event, that the study may have its intended practical result in everyday lives.

There is a tendency on the part of some teachers to put the Bible characters upon lofty pedestals, to point to Elijah's remarkable zeal for the Lord, to Daniel's wonderful steadfastness, to Isaiah's lofty thought of God, till pupils think of them only as "Bible characters," unlike any people of flesh and blood that have really lived on this earth. Do you remember in "Tom Brown's School Days" how shocked Tom was at first to hear his friend, Arthur, talk about the persons in the Bible just as though they were "just like men who were walking about in Rugby—the Doctor, or the masters, or the sixth form boys"? But after many talks with his friend the astonishment passed. "The scales seemed to drop from his eyes, and the Book became at once and forever to him the great human and divine Book, and the men and women whom he had looked upon as something quite different from himself became his friends and counsellors." Can you not make the Book and the men and women in it all this to your pupils this year?

The lessons are crowded with vital truths that bear on character and conduct. Three lesson truths or topics are given here with each lesson. Select the one best adapted to your pupils and teach it so that it will never be forgotten. Ian Maclaren's advice to the preacher the teacher also should lay to heart: Take one sin that happens to be mine and other men's, and let the preacher confine himself, say, to pride, and it will be strange if he does not arrest and shame me, but let him throw in a dozen other sins and I shall be unmoved.

Illustrations. That a child's nature is very receptive to stories, we all grant. But so is the nature of an adult. Did you ever hear a report of a sermon that gave the discussions, the reasonings, the arguments, and left out

the illustrations? Edward Everett Hale once said: "If you ever hear a minister remark in the midst of his discourse, 'If I had time I would illustrate this point for you,' just ask him for me to tell the story, and let the sermon go."

An abundance of helpful illustrations is given with each lesson that all teachers may find here the ones he needs to enforce his lesson teaching. Many are drawn from the mission field, when no direct missionary topic has been given. In telling illustrations to young pupils use as much detail as possible.

Some illustration from your own experience bearing on the lesson topic, or, failing that, one from the experience of some one you know, will have greater interest and weight for your class than anything that you have heard or read. One grain of a living teacher is worth an ounce of a dead author, and one ounce of the living teacher of your class is worth to that class a pound of any other living teacher.

Sentence Sermons. "There's a deal o' solid kickin' in the meekest looking mule." Dr. Joseph Parker compares this sentence of Lowell's with this one of his own: There is a good deal of obstinacy covered by apparent amiability, and observes: A remark such as this would pass without a moment's notice, but attached to such a figure as the poet used, it will be difficult for the mind ever to get rid of it. The sentence sermons given in "The Guide" express the truths of the lesson in words that are a pleasure to hear and are difficult to forget. They will have additional force if they can be read as well as heard. One or two of them written on your blackboard before the lesson period and copied by your pupils in notebooks brought for the purpose, at the time you refer to them in connection with your teaching, will be learned by them and always kept in mind.

The Lesson's Meanings for Us. "Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave."—*Ruskin.* Pre-eminently is this the purpose of Sunday-school education. There is a verse in Habakkuk that is often wrongly quoted, "Make it plain....so that he who runs may read," and this is seemingly the only object of some Sunday-school instruction. Altogether different is Habakkuk's wise counsel. Make it plain....that he may run that readeth it. "Christianity is not an idea in the air, but feet on the ground, going God's way." Your instruction should lead to action. The lesson taught Sunday should make the life lived on Monday easier and truer and nobler. Let your pupils see what God was to the men of the Bible and then let them realize that He can be the same to them. Let them see how the unrighteous lived that they may avoid like unrighteousness, and see how the good wrought that they may do good in their own measure.

The Lesson Briefly Told. The Historical Background and the Lesson Briefly Told give a connected account of the entire period covered by our year's lessons.

Subjects for Bible Class Discussion. There is such a wealth of relevant history connected with the lessons, and there are so many Books to be grasped as to their facts and aims, that most Bible Classes will not have time this year for the consideration of topics other than those directly connected with the lessons. Some of the present-day problems which the lesson texts call to mind or throw light upon are indicated in "The Guide." If you have the topics that will be taken up during each quarter typewritten, mimeographed, or printed, and given to all in your class, you will afford opportunity for preparation and more valuable will be the class discussions.

Work to be Assigned for the Next Lesson. In assigning home work four dangers are to be avoided; underrating pupils' ability to work, giving them uninteresting work, overburdening them with assignments, and neglecting to call for work assigned.

The direct, easy questions which are suitable for the youngest pupils are not given in "The Guide" because of lack of space and of the readiness with which such questions can be asked by all teachers. The questions that are to be looked up will familiarize pupils with the use of the Bible as well as with the information gained. When pupils are capable of finding the answers do not give them the Bible reference. Clippings from "The Guide" are often indicated to be given pupils in advance. An extra copy of "The Guide" for

this purpose will cost but two cents a week and will save the labor of copying.

The questions that require thought will interest pupils in the lessons and will lead to fruitful discussions in class. No work is ever done without interest of some sort. Many a man's work is but drudgery, but his interest in gaining a living keeps him at it. Many a day-school pupil has no interest in his school work, but fear of punishment or of his parents' displeasure or desire for approbation or class standing, is the sort of interest that urges him on. In Sunday-school work these motives are lacking, and the work itself must have interest for the pupils.

Note-Book or Scrap-Book Work of some sort should prove interesting and profitable to all classes. Younger pupils can tell the story more simply than the phrasing of the assignment in "The Guide" would call for. Primary pupils may profitably paste in their scrapbooks a picture that recalls the story, and write the Golden Text or memory verse. "This reminds me." One day a little friend of mine was allowed to visit another Sunday-school. She came home very enthusiastic. "Oh mother, do let me go with Lillian every Sunday," she begged, "I just love to hear about Jesus and how He obeyed His father and mother at home and worked as a carpenter. You know in our school we don't learn anything; all we do is to stick pictures." "Sticking pictures" is a fad just now in hosts of Sunday-schools, and a very good fad it is in the Primary Grades, but not when made so leading a feature that the little folks can say this is all that they learn.

Having asked your pupils to do home work expect them to do it, and do not fail to ask each pupil on the following Sunday for the answer to the question given him the previous week. Commend painstaking work even if it is not accurate.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS—THE BOOKS OF KINGS

Why we have Two Books of Kings and Chronicles. Our English versions follow the Septuagint (the earliest and most important Greek version) in dividing Kings and Chronicles into two books each. Written Greek requires more space than written Hebrew, the language in which the Old Testament was originally written, and as scrolls were of limited length it was necessary to use two scrolls in translating into Greek each of the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

The Writers. The Books themselves give us no information in regard to the writers, although they mention an official recorder, or chronicler. They emphasize the fact that the books are compilations by frequently referring to annals which have not been preserved. "The book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" is mentioned seventeen times, and "the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah," is mentioned fifteen times. A "Book of the Acts of Solomon" is referred to in 1 K. 11:41; "the history of Jehu, the son of Hanani, which is inserted in the book of the Kings of Israel," is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 20:34. These and yet other records mentioned as sources of information, or redactions from them, were the "original sources" used by the writers of our books of Kings and Chronicles. It is natural to suppose that Lives of Elijah and Elisha furnished their information in regard to these prophets whose stories occupy about one-fourth of the Books of Kings, for there were "histories of Shemaiah, the prophet, and of Iddo, the seer," referred to in Second Chronicles 12:15.

Their Methods. At the time that the events of the Civil War took place, much was written about it, and men who knew Lincoln wrote their estimation of him and recorded his sayings and deeds. Since then, biographers who had no personal knowledge of the War and who never saw Lincoln, have written Lives of Lincoln, each from his own point of view. They went to "the original sources" as we call the records made at the time of the events, and from them selected the facts and incidents they wished to use for the purpose they had in mind; these they rewrote in their own words, and added their own thoughts in the way of explanations, inferences and deductions. If they had incorporated in their biographies the exact words of the original

records, without quotation marks and without credit, and had welded them together with words of their own, they would have done what the Hebrew historians appear to have done who prepared the Books of Kings and Chronicles.

When the Books were Written. We need to keep in mind the fact that the most of the history as we have it was not written as soon as the events occurred. The last verses of Second Kings record the release of Jehoiachin from prison by Evil-Merodach in 561, and of an allowance made him "all his life," hence this part of the book must have been written after that king's death, or about 550 B. C. But the greater part of the Book was evidently written in Judah before the Exile, perhaps about 600 B. C., while there was yet hope that the nation might profit from its lessons.

Their Purpose. These historical books are histories written with a religious purpose. The writers have recorded events in the life of the nation and of individuals that show the growth and the decay of the Hebrew kingdom, and they have interpreted these events, revealing God's controlling hand through them all. There are two ways of writing history: "You can either leave God out," as Dr. Alexander Maclaren tells us, "or you can trace all things to Him. The former way calls itself 'scientific' and 'positive.' The latter is the Bible way. Perhaps, if modern history were written on the same principle as the Books of Kings, the Divine hand would be as plainly visible—only it requires an inspired historian to do it."

The historians looked at the kings and their ways from the high standpoint of whether the acts were pleasing or displeasing to God. With monotonous regularity we are told of each king of the Northern Kingdom, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, that "he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord," and even of some of the good kings of the Southern Kingdom—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham—it is added that "nevertheless the high places were not removed."

Judgment is pronounced upon each king, not as to his ability or statesmanship, but as to his relation to God, and the space given to each reign does not depend upon its importance politically but upon whether it promoted or retarded the right worship of the Lord. Jeroboam II, who had a long, prosperous reign, is dismissed in two or three verses, while Ahab is dealt with at considerable length because in his reign occurred the great struggle against Baalism.

The one main lesson which the narrative of the Books of Kings is meant to teach, Canon Farrar points out, is absolute faith and trust in God as an anchor which holds amid the wildest storms of ruin, and of apparently final failure. It shows us that duty is the reward of duty, and that there can be no happiness save for those who have learnt that duty and blessedness are one. And thus even by this book of annals—annals of wild deeds and troubled times—we may be taught the truths which find their perfect illustration and proof in the life and teaching of the Son of God.

Their Contents. The Books of Kings are a continuation of the Books of Samuel. The title of the Syriac Version reads: Here follows the Book of the Kings who flourished among this ancient people; and in it is also exhibited the history of the prophets who flourished in their time.

They begin with David's feeble old age, record the splendid glitter of Solomon's reign over the United Kingdom, and continue with the history of the two kingdoms which arose at his death till the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria and the Southern Kingdom by Babylon, thus covering a period of more than four centuries. Through it all we see the doom impending because of sins within the kingdom and foes without, until the nation is carried away captive and the land is left desolate.

"The historian has been blamed for the perpetual gloom which enwraps his narrative," says Canon Farrar, "but surely the criticism is unjust. He did not invent his story. The picture is, after all, far less gloomy than that presented in many a great historic record. Consider the features of such an age as that recorded by Tacitus, with the 'Iliad of woes' of which he was the annalist, the long ages of darkness in the fifth and following centuries; the unutterable miseries inflicted on the seaboard of Europe by the invasions of the Northmen; the condition of England in the middle of the fourteenth

century when the Black Death swept away half of her population; the extreme misery of the masses after the Thirty Years' War; or the desolating horrors of the wars of Napoleon which filled Germany with homeless and starving orphans. The annals of the Hebrew monarchy are less grim than these."

Their Style. There is a monotonous uniformity about the accounts of the kings, and most of them read like summaries of more expanded writings. The "framework" of each record is as follows:

I. Date of the king's accession according to the year of the contemporary king of the other kingdom; his age at the time; the duration of his reign; the name of his mother.

II. An account of his deeds and pronouncement of judgment thereon. Sometimes parts I and III are all that are given, the writer not deeming it necessary to give the facts on which he based his praise or condemnation.

III. A reference to the source of some of the writer's information; a notice of the king's death and burial; the name of his successor.

The writers were more interested in the prophets than in the kings, the personalities of Elijah and Elisha loom large, and their records are dramatically told with picturesque vividness of detail.

Outline of the Books.

I. The Last Days of David and the Reign of Solomon, 1 K. 1-11.43.

1. The Passing of David, 1 K. 1.1-2.11.
2. The Greatness of Solomon, 1 K. 2.11-4.34; 10.1-29.
3. The Building and Dedication of the First Temple, 1 K. 5.1-9.28.
4. Solomon's Apostasy, Adversaries, and Death, 1 K. 11.1-43.

II. The History of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel from the Disruption until the Fall of the Kingdom of Israel, 1 K. 12-2 K. 17.

1. Rehoboam in Judah and Jeroboam in Israel, 1 K. 12.1-14.31.
2. Abijam and Asa in Judah, 1 K. 15.1-24.
3. Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri and Ahab in Israel, 1 K. 15.25-16.34.
4. The prophet Elijah, 1 K. 17.1-2 K. 2.12.
   a. Defeat of the Syrians under Benhadad, I K. 20.
   b. Ahab's Death, 1 K. 22.1-40.
   c. Jehoshaphat's and Ahaziah's Reigns, 1 K. 22.41-2 K. 1.18.
5. The Prophet Elisha, 2 K. 2.1-8.15; 13.14-21.
6. Jehoram and Ahaziah in Judah, 2 K. 8.16-29.
7. Jehu in Israel, 2 K. 9.1-10.36.
8. Athaliah and Jehoash in Judah, 2 K. 11.1-12.21.
9. Jehoahaz and Jehoash in Israel, 2 K. 13.1-13.
   Wars with Moab and Syria, 2 K. 13.22-25.
10. Amaziah and Azariah in Judah, 2 K. 14.1-22; 15.1-7.
11. Jeroboam II. Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah and Pekah in Israel, 2 K. 14.23.29; 15.8-31.
    a. Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-Pileser, 2 K. 15.29.
12. Jotham and Ahaz in Judah, 2 K. 15.32-16.20.
    a. Saved from Syria through Allegiance to Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria, 2 K. 15.5-18.
13. Israel conquered by Assyria in Hoshea's Reign and carried into Captivity, 2 K. 17.1-41.
    a. Foreigners brought into Samaria, 2 K. 17.24-41.

III. The History of the Kingdom of Judah from the Fall of the Kingdom of Israel until the Babylonian Exile, 2 K. 18.1-25.37.

1. Hezekiah's Reign, 2 K. 18-20.
   a. Invasion of Sennacherib, 2 K. 18.13-37.
   b. Isaiah's Prophecy of Deliverance, 2 K. 19.20-34.
2. Manasseh's and Amon's Reigns, 2 K. 21.1-26.
3. Josiah's Reign, 2 K. 22.1-23.30.

4. Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim's Reigns, 2 K. 23.31-24.6.
   a. Jehoahaz deposed by Pharaoh of Egypt, 2 K. 23.33.
   b. Jehoiakim becomes subject to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, 2 K. 24.1-5.
5. Jehoiachin's Reign, 2 K. 24.6-9.
   a. The Captivity begins, 2 K. 24.10-16.
6. Zedekiah's Reign, 2 K. 24.17-24.19.
7. Jerusalem captured and Judah carried into Exile in Babylon, 2 K. 25.
   a. The city laid waste and Temple destroyed, 2 K. 25.1-21.
   b. Gedaliah made Governor of Judah, 2 K. 25.22-26.
   c. Jehoiachin kindly treated by Evil-Merodach, 2 K. 25.27-30.

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES

Contents. Jerome calls Chronicles an epitome of the Old Testament. He it was who first gave the books this name, in his translation into the Latin. The Septuagint calls them the "Things Omitted." They contain information omitted in Samuel and Kings in regard to the worship at Jerusalem, as well as a repetition, often giving additional facts and observations, of portions of these books. They furnish an account of the worship of the Israelites from the death of Saul to the decree of Cyrus permitting the rebuilding of the temple, as well as a condensed history of events from the beginning of things till the captivity of Judah.

The Syriac title of these books is "The Book of the Transactions of the Kings of Judah." After the Disruption only the record of Judah is given. In 2 Ch. 25.7 we read: There came a man of God to him (Amaziah) saying, O King, let not the army of Israel go with thee, for Jehovah is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim: this, seemingly, is the attitude of the writer throughout his record. Whatever he tells about the kingdom of Israel is told incidentally because of its connection with the history of the Kingdom of Judah.

The Writer and His Purpose. According to the Talmud "Ezra wrote the book (Ezra-Nehemiah) and the genealogies in Chronicles." It seems probable that the writer was a priest or Levite, and perhaps a temple singer.

The viewpoints of the writers of Kings and Chronicles are different; that of the writer of Kings is prophetic, while that of the writer of Chronicles is priestly. Both were interested in the correct worship of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, but for the writer of Chronicles all ritual interests were of supreme importance.

The writing carries the history to six generations after Zerubbabel, 1 Ch. 3.19, or about 350 B. C., and the Greek text takes it down to about 250 B. C. The date of the writing is generally assigned to 300 B. C., when it was necessary to inform those who had returned from the captivity of the former glory of the temple and their need of it and its worship.

Outline of the Books.

I. Genealogical Tables from Adam to David, 1 Ch. 1-9.

II. Death of Saul, 1 Ch. 10.

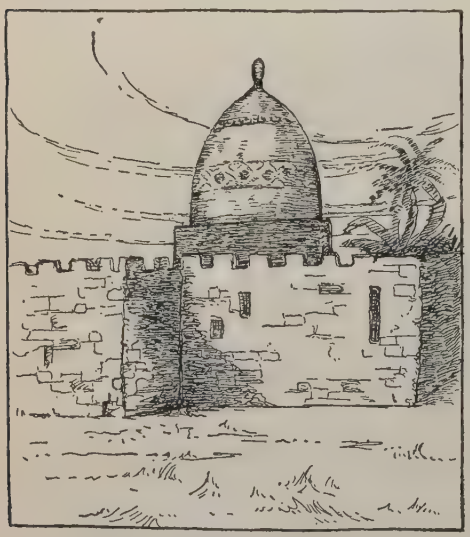
III. David's Reign, 1 Ch. 11-29.
   1. David's Accession and his Followers, 1 Ch. 11-12.
   2. The Ark, 1 Ch. 13-16.
   3. David's Victories, Gathering of Treasure for the Temple, and Numbering of the People, 1 Ch. 18-21.
   4. The Temple: David's Desire to build it; his Preparation for the Building and its Services, 1 Ch. 17.22-29.
   5. Death of David, 1 Ch. 29.26-30.

IV. Solomon's Reign, 2 Ch. 1-9.
   1. His Prosperity, 2 Ch. 1-2; 8-9.
   2. Building and Consecration of Temple, 2 Ch. 3.7.
   3. His Death, 2 Ch. 9.29-31.

V. The Kings of Judah from the Disruption till the Return from Captivity, 2 Ch. 10-36.
1. Revolt of the Ten Tribes under Jeroboam, 2 Ch. 10.1-11.4.
2. Degeneracy under Rehoboam and Abijah, 2 Ch. 11.5-13.22.
3. Reforms under Asa and Jehoshaphat, 2 Ch. 14-20.
4. Degeneracy under Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah, 2 Ch. 21-23.
5. Reform under Joash, 2 Ch. 24.
6. Degeneracy under Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz, 2 Ch. 25-28.
7. Reform under Hezekiah, 2 Ch. 29-32.
8. Degeneracy under Manasseh and Amon, 2 Ch. 33.
9. Reform under Josiah, 2 Ch. 34-35.
10. Degeneracy under Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, 2 Ch. 36.1-16.
11. Captivity, 2 Ch. 36.1-23.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

Contents. Between the virtual ending of Second Chronicles (36.21) and the last two verses, which repeat the first words of Ezra, occurred the captivity in Babylon. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah take up the history of the Jews in Jerusalem after the captivity. In the Hebrew canon and the Talmud the two form one book. Together they furnish a record of the re-founding of the nation, re-building of the temple and re-establishing of the temple worship and institutions in Jerusalem during the first hundred years under Persian rule, though there is a gap of perhaps sixty years between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, and of twelve or thirteen years between Ezra and Nehemiah, and the regular sequence of events is not always followed.



Reputed Tomb of Ezra

Noticeable is the similarity of these books and of Chronicles as regards the love of the Law, the interest in the details of the temple worship, and the fondness for long lists and numbers.

The Writers. The leading actors in the history are Ezra and Nehemiah, and the writings of each are preserved in the "I sections" of the books. Whether each wrote the whole book to which is given his name, depending upon official documents for the events with which he was not personally connected; whether some one else took these personal memoirs, together with the historical summaries written, not in Hebrew like the rest of the books, but in Aramaic, and the "state documents" and edited them; or whether, in the latter event, there was but one final writer for both books and perhaps for Chronicles as well, cannot now be known.

There are certain statements in the books themselves which tend to show that these, at least, were written sometime after the main events occurred; among them are the name of Jaddua in one of the lists who was a high priest that lived in the time of Alexander the Great, the reference to "Darius the Persian," suggesting that the dynasty of Persia had passed away, and the looking back to "the days of Nehemiah" in Neh. 12.47.

The Style of the Book of Ezra. Ezra is a dignified, somewhat prosaic, unvarnished tale which rises to eloquence only in the prayer of Ezra, 9.6-15, and is wholly lacking in stirring incidents. The personality of Ezra is that of an energetic, intensely patriotic, deeply religious, but rather formal ecclesiastic,

Outline of Ezra.

I. The Return from Captivity under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the Rebuilding of the temple, 1-6.
  1. Edict of Cyrus, 1.
  2. List of the Returning Exiles, 2.
  3. Worship Resumed and Re-building of Temple begun, 3.
  4. Opposition and Cessation of Work, 4.
  5. Building Resumed and Finished, 5-6.
    a. The Prophets Haggai and Zechariah, 4.1-2.
    b. Letter to Darius, 5.6-17.
    c. Answer of Darius, 6.1-12.
    d. Temple Finished and Dedicated, 6.13-22.

II. The Coming of Ezra and his Reformation, 7-10.
  1. Ezra's Company, Artaxerxes' Letter, Preparations for the Journey, Arrival in Jerusalem, 7-8.
  2. Reformation, 9-10.
    a. Ezra's Indignation and Prayer because of Mixed Marriages, 9.
    b. The Reformation, 10.

The Style of the Book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah is characterized by a directness and vigor that are captivating. The book is largely autobiographical, and is stamped with the impression of a gracious, resourceful, devout man of prayer and daring man of action.

Outline of Nehemiah.

I. Nehemiah's Visit to Jerusalem and Building of the Wall, 1-7.
  1. His Grief concerning Jerusalem, 1.
  2. His Coming to the City, 2.
  3. Details of the Building of the Wall, 3.
  4. Opposition of Enemies, 4.
  5. Trouble because of Usury, 5.
  6. Wall finished despite Plots of Enemies, 6.
  7. List of those who returned from Exile, 7.

II. The Reading of the Law, 8-10.
  1. Reading of the Law, and Feast of Tabernacles, 8.
  2. Prayer of the Levites, 9.
  3. Covenant of the People, 10.

III. The Settlement of the Cities, 11-13.
  1. Lists of the People, 11.1-12.26.
  2. Dedication of the Wall, 12.27-13.3.
  3. Reforms, 13.4-31.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

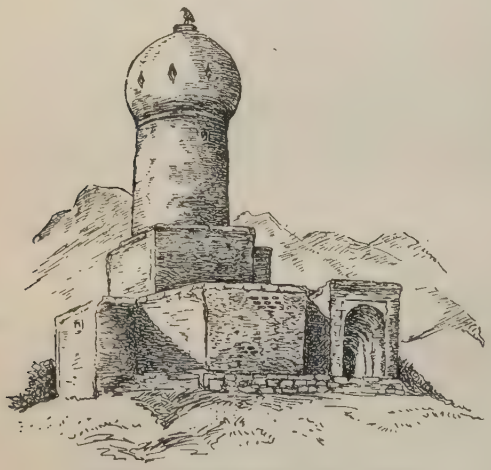
Character and Estimation of the Book. This is the most neglected, perhaps, of all the books of the Bible by Christians, but the most popular of them all with the Jews. There are more manuscripts of Esther than of any other Biblical Book, and it is the desire of every Jewish family to possess one. In the estimation of the Jews it stands second to the Pentateuch alone; they say that "The Prophets may fail, but not *The Roll*," as they term this book.

There are various reasons why the book has always puzzled scholars. There are troublesome questions connected with the history; (notably that Mordecai is one of the exiles deported with Jehoiachin in 597 B. C. and it is now 485-464 B. C.), there is no mention of God nor any direct reference to Him in the book; there is no reference to the Law, the past history of the Israelites, the temple, sacrifice, nor worship, nor is any part of the book pervaded by a religious spirit; there is no great moral lesson taught; the ethical standard is low—the cruelty and treachery of Haman are condemned by implication, it is true, but the equal cruelty of Mordecai and Esther are loudly acclaimed; the spirit of pride and vengeance and hatred and exclusiveness pervades the whole. The book is patriotic, not religious: the advancement of the Jews' cause, not of Jehovah's, is the leading thought throughout. Said Luther: "I

am so hostile to this book (Second Book of Maccabees) and that of Esther, that I wish they did not exist; they are too Judaising, and contain many heathenish improprieties."

The oldest manuscripts of the Septuagint contain 270 verses instead of 167 as does our translation of the Hebrew text, and the additional verses, which are scattered throughout the book, supply the religious element.

Though the name of God is not mentioned, the faith of Mordecai and Esther in Him who overrules events and cares for His people is easily seen. The story tells of human players and their plots, and also shows the divine Player who controls the plots. "Then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place," 4.14, is an evident paraphrase for "Then will the Lord send relief and deliverance through some one else." Dr. Lewis B. Paton offers this interesting explanation of the avoidance of the name of God: Esther was meant to be read at the annual merry-making of Purim, for which the Mishna lays down the rule that people are to drink until they are unable to distinguish between "Blessed be Mordecai!" and "Cursed be Haman!" See Lesson VI of Fourth Quarter. On such occasions the name of God might be profaned, if it occurred in the reading, and, therefore, it was deemed best to omit it altogether.



Reputed Tomb of Mordecai and Esther

Authorship and Date. The book itself gives no clue to its writer, taking its name from that of the heroine. It was evidently written by a Jew who was very familiar with Persian history and customs. The scenes are laid in the Persian court during the reign of Xerxes, among the Jews who lived in the land of their exile at the time between the completion of the second temple and the mission of Ezra to Jerusalem. The book was written later. The opening words show that the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) was long past: "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia) that in those days when the King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom," etc.

Purpose. The book certainly served the purpose of keeping alive the patriotic enthusiasm of the Jews through long ages of oppression, and this would seem to have been its primary object.

It supplies the motive for keeping the Feast of Purim, that feast of the Jews about which their Law says nothing, a feast that is social and merry, not solemn and religious. That festival originated with the victory over Haman's plots against the Jews, if the book is purely historical: it is a continuation of the Babylonian New Year's Feast Zagmuk, when the gods were supposed to draw the lots (Purim) for the coming year, if investigations of modern scholars are correct, and thus the Book of Esther, while based on historical facts, grafts a Jewish branch on to a Babylonian trunk.

The Story. It is a drama thrillingly told in five acts. The scene is Shushan, one of the capitals of Persia. The time is in the reign of Xerxes. The leading persons are Xerxes the king, a cruel, sensuous, despotic monarch; Mordecai, an excellent Jew for the time and place, but a master at hatred and intrigue; Esther, the beautiful maiden who became the Queen of Persia, a brave, loyal Jewess who was yet vindictive and cruel; Haman, the king's chief minister, the shrewd villain of the story, haughty and unscrupulous.

Act I. Xerxes is on the throne. Queen Vashti is deposed because she fails to obey her lord's command to appear at his feast. A new queen is sought. Esther is chosen, but does not betray her nationality. She informs the king of a plot to take his life, discovered by her cousin Mordecai. Haman is promoted above all the princes, and because Mordecai, the Jew, fails to bow down before him he induces the king to sign a decree ordering the slaying on a certain day a year hence of all the Jews in his whole realm.

Act II. Mordecai learns of the decree and attracts the attention of the queen by sitting before the king's gate in sackcloth and ashes. Through Hathach messages pass between Mordecai and Esther, and Esther is persuaded to intercede for the Jews with the king.

Act III. Esther prepares banquets for the king and Haman on two successive days. Haman is greatly pleased with the honor, but the pleasure of the first banquet is embittered by the sight of Mordecai at the king's gate who fails to bow or move for him. At the counsel of Zeresh, his wife, he has a gallows prepared for Mordecai. That night the king cannot sleep and has the state records read to him. There he is reminded of Mordecai's favor. When Haman comes the next day intending to ask the king to order Mordecai hanged, he is asked what shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor. Thinking the king means himself, Haman advises a triumphal procession through the city, and learns that the honor is for the hated Mordecai. He carries out the king's order. At the second day's banquet Esther informs the King of Haman's plot, and the king orders Haman hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. In response to Esther's petition for her people he authorizes the Jews to resist their enemies, when his earlier decree ordering their slaughter is executed.

Act IV. The appointed day arrives. The Jews are victorious, slaying seventy-five thousand of their enemies. The king tells Esther the number that are slain in the capital; she petitions for a second slaughter there the day following, and the hanging of Haman's ten sons. The king has her wish executed.

Act V. Mordecai, who is next unto the king in power, sends letters to the Jews far and near enjoining the keeping and perpetuating of the fourteenth and fifteenth day of the month Adar as days of rejoicing. And these days are called Purim, after the name of Pur, because Haman had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to destroy them.

Outline.

1. The Rejection of Vashti, 1.
2. The Choice of Esther, 2.1-20.
3. Mordecai, saves the Life of Ahasuerus, 2.21-22.
4. The Promotion of Haman and his Plot against the Jews, 3.
5. The Bravery of Esther, the Downfall of Haman, and the Deliverance of the Jews, 4.1-9.16.
6. The Institution of the Feast of Purim, 9.17-32.
7. Appendix, 10.

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

Major and Minor Prophets. There are five books in the Old Testament that we call the Major Prophets and twelve to which we give the name of Minor Prophets. This does not mean that the twelve books are of less importance than the five books: it simply means that the twelve are the shorter ones, all of them together as they were written on one roll in ancient days not equalling the Book of Isaiah in length. It was more than three centuries after Christ that Jerome and Augustine gave them this title of Minor Prophets.

Order of the Prophetical Books. The books are not arranged in our Bible according to their chronological order. The headings at the beginning of each book were added by later writers, it is believed. It is impossible to tell the exact time the books were written, but they may be grouped in four periods:

1. The Assyrian Ascendency, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum.

2. Judah's Decline. Jeremiah, Habakkuk.
3. The Exile and Restoration. Ezekiel, the later part of Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
4. Later. Perhaps Joel, Jonah, Daniel and Obadiah.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

The Prophet Hosea. The second in order of time of the great prophets of the eighth century who left a written record of their teachings, is Hosea, the son of Beeri. We know only what can be inferred about him from his writing. He was the only one of the prophetical writers who was a native of the Northern Kingdom: this we learn from the fact that all the places he mentions are in the land of Ephraim and because of his great sympathy with the people of the Northern Kingdom. He prophesied in the latter days of Jeroboam II and his immediate successors. From the historical allusions in the book we learn that his prophetical career fell between the years 746 and 735 B. C.

"If Amos (the first prophet of the eighth century), is the St. James of the Old Testament, Hosea is the St. John," says Professor McFadyen. "Amos lays the emphasis on the moral expression of the religious impulse, while Hosea is more concerned with religion at its roots and in its essence. Thus Hosea's work is supplementary to that of Amos, emphasizing the love of God where Amos had emphasized His righteousness. There is something of the mystic, too, in Hosea: in all experiences he finds something typical."

The Book. The Book of Hosea divides naturally into two parts, Part I including chapters 1-3 and Part II chapters 4-14, the former assigned to the period before the death of Jeroboam II, and the latter to the confused times that followed, when kings were assassinated in rapid succession, when by their desire for alliance with Assyria or Egypt the rulers were heading the Ship of State towards inevitable doom, when corruption and defiance of law reigned everywhere.

Part I. "A wife in New York wronged her husband cruelly some years ago, running away with another man. The other day, having long ago been deserted and now an outcast and miserable, she met her husband. She turned away in shame to avoid him. He looked at her with the old look and said in the old tones, 'Mary'. She returned and was saved, finding the love unchanged. His friends at first said he was a fool, although now they are wondering, having seen the great redemption. He knew what Christ-love was. To imitate His love is to love to the end."

This paragraph I find in an editorial upon "Imitating the Love of Christ" in the *Christian Work and Evangelist.* Is it not the story of Hosea in modern terms, which illustrated in Hosea's mind *Imitating the Love of God?*

Hosea records his domestic misery, the unfaithfulness of his wife Gomer, his love that led him to buy her release from her slavery, and his efforts to bring about her redemption. If human love can be so deep and lasting, how unfathomable must be the divine love! is the lesson Hosea learns. Between this personal history and God's relation to His people Israel the prophet sees an analogy. Israel is unfaithful to God, yet God still loves His people and would redeem them, even though it must be through the discipline of exile. "Hosea is the first of the prophets to rise to the sublime height of calling the affection with which Jehovah regards His people by the name of love."

Part II. The first verse announces its main theme: Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. Hosea does not hesitate to lay bare the evils of the time, the trust in an alliance with Assyria or Egypt, the forgetfulness of God, the observing of the forms of religion but mingling idolatry with it, and the social crimes of his day. Though his message is a stern one, denouncing, warning, threatening, yet his words are "more sob than speech," and through it runs a tender note, as he pleads for return to God, and tells of the forgiving love of God that will not let His people go. While the language is impassioned, tempestuous, and often beautiful, it is disconnected and abrupt, full

of sudden changes from despair to hopefulness, from conviction that the sin of Israel will be punished to hope of final pardon and deliverance.

The last chapter, from which our lesson (2-10) is taken, reminds one of the calm that follows a tempest, with its quiet, beautiful words of exhortation and promised blessings.

The most memorable verse of Hosea, the one twice quoted by Christ, is 6.6: For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

Outline.

I. The Prophet's Lesson, 1-3.
   1. His Domestic Life, 1.
   2. Its Lesson, the Nature of Israel's Sin, 2.
   3. Forgiveness, 3.
II. The Prophet's Messages, 4-14
   1. Israel's Sins rebuked, 4-7.
   2. Israel's Retribution, 8-10.
   3. The Love of the Lord for His Wayward People, 11-14.

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Isaiah the Man. Before the prophetic voice of Hosea was stilled, the prophet Isaiah was being heard in the Southern Kingdom. Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was in many respects the greatest of all the prophets, one of the most wonderful characters of the Old Testament. Whether or not he was of royal lineage, he was regal in character, a courtier and a scholar. He was born perhaps about 760 B. C.; he preached at Jerusalem during the last forty years of the eighth century, in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; and according to tradition he met a martyr's death at the hands of King Manasseh.

The Reformer-Statesman. An open-eyed, out-spoken preacher of righteousness was Isaiah, who saw everything "from the court intrigues to a woman's crimping-pins." With absolute sincerity, uncompromising severity, and unflinching courage he attacked the evils of his time, pouring contempt upon weak, cowardly king Ahaz as readily as in scathing words he denounced the social and political corruption of the people. How he strove to arouse the nation to its high calling is shown in our lesson of the Parable of the Vineyard, which forcibly teaches that God expected results commensurate with His care for His chosen people, and they were grievously disappointing Him.

As a statesman Isaiah faced conditions squarely, saw their true meaning and far-reaching tendencies, and counseled kings and nations from the standpoint of the divine Ruler who shapes all history. He well understood the weakness of the Egyptian power and the vanity of her promises; he saw the greatness of the Assyrian power and the disastrous results that alliance with her would bring about; he wisely counseled the avoidance of all entangling alliances with foreign powers, and the reliance upon the help of the Lord. When once allegiance to Assyria was promised, however, he knew the futility of breaking away, and in the face of the bitterest opposition he counseled loyalty to the promises made. He was a stern lover of justice, and when still later Sennacherib's demands were clearly unjust, he advised Hezekiah to defy him. "Through the varying political crises he calmly and with that conviction which comes only from the grasp of eternal principles, and an intimate touch with Him who rules the universe, offered counsels which though usually rejected, were shown by later events to have been supremely wise and sane."

The Prophet-Teacher. A prince in spiritual vision was this inspired messenger. In Hezekiah's reign he was the one person in all Jerusalem to whom king and people alike looked for a revelation of the will of God.

As a theologian Isaiah teaches many things; chief among them is his representation of the sublime majesty and holiness of God. We have a wonderful lesson upon this theme (Lesson 2, Second Quarter), the study of the vision that made Isaiah a prophet, when he "saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Isaiah teaches also that this

holy Being is God not of Israel alone: the fullness of the whole earth is His glory.

Lofty is the prophet's conception of God. and clear is his conception of God's plan of salvation for the nation and for individuals. Come back, come back, for why will ye die? is the refrain that follows his every denunciation. If the people will only return to the Lord, all will yet be well. Punishment is redemptive. A remnant will be repentant and will become fitted to carry out the divine will.

Especially is Isaiah the prophet of faith. In quietness and confidence your strength shall be (30.15) is his insistent teaching.

The Poet-Orator. Isaiah has been called "the most poetic of all the bards of Israel." Our translations do not show that the greater part of his addresses are not prose, but poetry. "A marvelous lilt and a balanced parallelism runs through them all."

What a wonderful orator he must have been, one of the world's greatest! In the words of Dr. W. R. Harper: "His platform was the busy thoroughfare, the steps of the temple, the corner of the street; and we can without difficulty picture for ourselves the prophet, now with a few disciples at his feet, again with thousands of Jerusalem's citizens hanging on his words, a young man when his heart was stirred by the profligacy of his times; a middle-aged man when he describes the coming doom of Samaria, an old man, yet still full of fire and vigor in these last great days when Sennacherib's host threatened to wipe Israel off the face of the earth."

The beauty of expression in his writings, as well as the depths of thought, are marvelous, says Mathew Arnold. His utterances are rich in apt simile and metaphor and sudden contrasts; he was a master of satire and pathos, an adept at proverb and parable.

The Book of Isaiah. The odes and orations that are gathered in this one book make it the second longest prophetical book of the Bible. How many of them were written by Isaiah is a much-discussed question. The problem is well-stated by Dean Farrar: "In a book called by the name of the prophet Isaiah, who flourished between 740 and 700 B. C., the last twenty-seven chapters deal with the captivity suffered by the Jews in Babylon from 598 to 538, and more particularly with the advent about 550, of Cyrus, whom they name. Are we to take for granted that Isaiah himself prophetically wrote these chapters, or must we assign them to a nameless author or authors of the period of which they treat?"

"Prophecy is a moral, not a magical thing; and nothing would be gained by the delivery of a message over a century and a half before it was needed, to a people to whom it was irrelevant and unintelligible." There is no suggestion in the chapters themselves that the author is living in some other period and prophesying about events to come at least a hundred and fifty years hence. There is no suggestion that the one who brought the prophecies together intended them all to be taken as the words of the prophet Isaiah; some are distinctly called "the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz," but more are without any designation. From other books of the Bible we know that because a book is called by a prophet's name it is not necessarily written by that prophet. Between the first thirty-five chapters of Isaiah, which record the prophecies of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, and these last twenty-seven chapters there are four narrative chapters, a sort of historical appendix that looks both backward and forward, that are found also with some variations in 2 K. 18.13-20.19.

Plainly the Book is not a unity. The prophet of the last part of the Book is well-spoken of as "The Great Unknown." He is of all the prophets the most majestic in his style, as the most spiritual in his message," says Dr. Lyman Abbott. "The truths that God is One, and is a righteous God, and demands righteousness of His children, and will accept nothing less and asks for nothing more, he might have learned from Amos and Hosea and Micah and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel; but he added what none of them saw, the truths that the sorrowing ones are the triumphant ones, that suffering love is conquering love, that sorrow is victor. Christ's life and death will illustrate and exemplify this truth. Paul, the poet philosopher of the first century, will expand and apply it. But neither literature nor life has any

higher message to give to the world than the message of this prophet, who has exemplified his own doctrine of self-abnegation by leaving his writings to be bound up with those of a predecessor, while he himself remains forever unknown."

Outline.

I. Prophecies of Isaiah in the Time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah, 1-35.
  1. Perverseness of God's People, 1.
  2. Judgment Imminent because of their Sins, 2-5.
     (Parable of Vineyard, 5.1-7; "Woes," 5.8-23.)
  3. Isaiah's Vision and Call, 6.
  4. Various Prophecies, 7-12.
     (The child Immanuel, 7-14; Birth and Reign of the Prince of Peace, 9:1-7; Assyria shall be punished, 10.5-12; A Remnant of Israel shall return, 10.20-23; Reign of the Branch from Jesse's Roots, 11; Song of Thanksgiving, 12.)
  5. Prophecies concerning Foreign Nations, 13-27.
     (Song of Praise for Jehovah's Favor, 25; Song of Trust in His Protection, 26.)
  6. Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem, 28-35.
     (Condemnation for Drunkenness, 28.1-13; Parable from Husbandry, 28.23-19; Reign of the Righteous King, 32.1-8; God's Indignation against Judah's Enemies, 34; Zion's Happy Future, 35.)

II. Historical Section, 36-39.
  1. Sennacherib's Invasion, 36-37.
     (Hezekiah's Prayer, 37.14-20.)
  2. Hezekiah's Recovery from Sickness and his Song of Thanksgiving, 38.
  3. Messengers from Babylon, 39.

III. Prophecies belonging to the Close of the Exile or Later, 40-66.
  1. Encouragement to the Exiles in Babylon, 40-56.
     a. Jehovah's Promised Deliverance, 40-48.
        (The Greatness of Jehovah, 40.10-26; the Only God, 44.6-8; the Only Savior, 45.18-25.)
     b. The Deliverer, 49-56.
        (The Servant of the Lord, 41.8-20; 42.1-7, 18-25; 43.5-10; 49.1-9; 50.4-10; 52.13-53.12.)
  2. Counsels and Encouragement chiefly to those living in the Time of Ezra, 57-66.

THE BOOK OF MICAH

The Prophet Micah. Micah was a younger contemporary of Isaiah, a peasant living in Moresheth, an obscure hamlet on the western foothills bordering the Philistine plain, perhaps twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. Because his father's name is not mentioned, it is believed that unlike Isaiah he came from an unimportant family, but from a deeply religious family, for his name means "Who is like unto Jehovah?"

His public ministry fell "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," 737-686 B. C., the introduction to the Book states. The sixth verse of the first chapter seems to indicate that when his early prophecies were uttered the fall of Samaria (722 B. C.) was imminent. Jeremiah 26.18 says that Micah's preaching led to the reformation of Hezekiah. When Sennacherib's army in 701 B. C. overcame Judah the truth of Micah's warnings was made manifest, and then, probably, occurred the reform measures of Hezekiah mentioned in 2 K. 18.4.

His Theme. Micah was called of God to reveal His will: "I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob (Judah) his transgression, and to Israel (Northern Kingdom) his sin," 3.8. While his prophecies are addressed to both kingdoms, they all refer more particularly to Judah, or Jerusalem where power was centralized. His words should be studied with those of Isaiah, for as Calvin remarks, "It pleased God that His testimony should be borne by the mouth of two."

Unlike Isaiah, Micah does not concern himself with the political follies of rulers, but in the severest terms he arraigns king, judges, priests and prophets for their sins of selfishness and greed; the rich were growing richer by oppressing the poor, the wealthy land-owners were driving off the smaller holders, the judges and officials, the false prophets and the priests, were unjust and inhuman. The prophet had grasped the great thought of the justice and mercy required by God, and it is injustice and cruelty that he denounces so vigorously. The great calamity that he foresees as the consequence of their sins points to the Assyrians.

Contents and Style of the Book. The book is a summary of the prophet's teachings. Evidently short utterances spoken at various times are put together, thus accounting for the abrupt transitions from one thought to another and for the obscurity of meaning. Very great is the contrast between the intensely stern tone of the first three chapters, which almost surpass those of Isaiah, and the softer moods of chapters four and five, containing the wonderful promises of the Messianic age (our lesson for May 28th.)

There are three verses of Micah which every one should know by heart: his vision of peace, 4.3; his wonderful prophecy concerning the Messiah, 5.2; and his noble definition of true religion, one of the greatest utterances of the Old Testament, 6.8.

Outline.

I. Prophecy of Judgment for Sin, 1.
II. Reasons for the Judgment, Oppression of the Poor, and other Crimes of Leaders, 2.3.
III. Prophecies of Blessing, 4.5.
IV. Corruption of the Nation; God the Source of Light and Salvation, 7.8.

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

The Prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was born at Anathoth, a small village near Jerusalem, the son of Hilkiah the priest, who could probably trace his connection back to Abiathar the friend of David.

While the voice of the prophet Zephaniah was being heard in the land, in the thirteenth year of king Josiah, the call to the prophetic office came to Jeremiah. The inward struggle that took place in the young man's extremely sensitive and shrinking heart he has told us in the form of a dialogue between God and himself. "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold I know not how to speak; for I am a child." With the call came the power. "Behold, I have made thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land." The prophet's whole career henceforth is proof that God was with him to deliver him as He promised.

In his experiences Jeremiah reminds one of Paul: both prophets had to contend with natural impediments, and both overcame in the strength of Him whom they served. Both were much-enduring men, often persecuted and often in danger. Jeremiah's message was scorned, the whole tide of religious authority and popular feeling was turned against him, he was defied and denounced, struck in the face by the priest Pashur, thrust into the stocks for ridicule, cast into a horrible prison, let down into a miry well, hurried off into exile in Egypt, and there, according to tradition, stoned to death by his countrymen who resented his reproofs. Jewish commentators say that the man of sorrows of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah is seemingly the most human of all the prophets. We understand his life and character because in his Book in unconscious self-revelation he frankly lets us see the workings of his mind and heart.

Very different is he from Isaiah. Isaiah is the saint, whose "soul is like a star, dwelling apart:" Jeremiah is the noble human nature that bears the sins of his people and confesses them as his own. Passionate are the invectives he hurls against Pashur and Hananiah, terrible his prayers for

divine vengeance, in moments of utter discouragement he curses the day he was born; and he has earned for himself the title of the weeping prophet, who exclaims, Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears. The prophets that preceded Jeremiah seemed to preach at their countrymen; Jeremiah loved and suffered with them and fairly wrestled with God in prayer for their salvation, for he was wont, as he tells us, to "roll his cause upon the Lord." He was filled with an overwhelming sense of the need of God. "'Isaiah is a regal soul," well says Dr. McFadyen; "having seen the King once, he has seen him forever, and into his heart the vision has brought quietness, confidence, and serenity: but not so Jeremiah, more tender and emotional by nature, his sense of God (though not his faith in God) is more exposed to the gusts of circumstances; there come times when he would fain stifle the divine word within him, and have done with it forever, but it is mightier than he, and it flashes forth, in spite of him, in words of fire."

Withal Jeremiah is a fascinating personality, lovable for his uprightness of nature, tenderness of heart, tenacity of purpose, strength of will, invincibleness of faith, and devotedness of service.

His Teachings. Jeremiah was Jehovah's spokesman in dark and disastrous days. His public ministry lasted through the reigns of Josiah (after the thirteenth year), Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, a period of over forty years. Those were eventful times. He knew of the invading Scythians in the year 626 B. C., the reform measures of Josiah in 620, Josiah's defeat and death on the field of Meggido in 608, the fall of Nineveh and the end of the Assyrian Empire in 607, the rise of Babylon, the conquest of Judah in 597, the capture of Jerusalem in 586. As he saw the long night of exile settling down upon his nation, his prophetic sight went farther, and he beheld a new city arising out of the ruins of Jerusalem, a new covenant taking the place of the old.

Throughout this period of destruction and reconstruction public morality was at as low an ebb as political autonomy: the same idolatries and vices were rampant as in Isaiah's time. In the prophet's mind the former was the cause of the latter. When rains ceased and harvests failed, he interpreted the suffering as a just punishment sent by the Lord for the sins of the nation: Your sins have withholden good from you, he declared. Was he right? Were not Jeremiah's own sufferings a proof that prosperity does not depend on merit? We need only recall Jesus' words: "Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered these things? I tell you nay." Yet Jeremiah's conviction was fruitful of good at a time when such teaching was an advance over the belief that calamities were divinely sent because of failure to offer full and sufficient sacrifice. And the consciences of the people told them that they deserved punishment.

It was not enough that there should be a reform of worship, Jeremiah taught; the true reform must be of the heart. No official reform like that of Josiah could avail—though the prophet never once alludes to it—the reform must be a thorough amendment of life and morals.

The moral responsibility of the individual, the personal, spiritual relation between God and man, the universality of religion, are his great teachings. For us most helpful is the lesson of his own life, the evidence of the sustaining power of a living faith in God.

Jeremiah's mission to his people seemed a tragic failure, yet, as so often is the case, after his death his words made a profound and lasting impression upon the spiritual leaders of his nation he so loved. The exile revealed the truth of his utterances, and the Book of Ezra begins: Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished.

How the Book of Jeremiah Was Written. An insight into the process we have in our lesson for August 13th. He had preached for twenty years before he committed any of his prophecies to writing. Then "the word of the Lord came to him" directing him to write his messages on a roll. "He was one of the great prophetic souls who walked so close to God that he recognized in every conviction which came to him the prompting of the divine voice." He recalled his earlier messages which he had delivered in the

temple courts or at the city gates or in the royal palace, and dictated them to Baruch, his friend and disciple. Graphically are told the reception of the roll and its destruction by Jehoiakim. Undaunted, the prophet at once prepared a second roll, and this time "added many other similar words." In the earlier part of the book which Jeremiah dictated, we read that "the word of the Lord came unto me," while in the latter part we read that "the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah." Probably the later portions were preserved by Baruch or some later scribe, who arranged and edited them. At the end of the fifty-second chapter we are told "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah," and then follows the fifty-third chapter which is substantially the same as the thirty-ninth.

The Style of the Book. "Jeremiah has not the sublimity and sustained oratorical power of Isaiah, nor the pungency of Amos, the poignancy of Hosea, the fire and verve of Nahum; the subtlety of Habakkuk; but in richness of imagery, in fulness of human interest, in lucidity and naturalness, in his command of the various resources of poetry, eloquence, pathos and practical appeal, he is the greatest of the writing prophets."

Contents. The Book is the longest of the prophetical writings. The sermons are not chronologically arranged, but are grouped according to theme. Their general tenor is one of stern denunciation, and to a careless reader the sense of gloom is the most striking. But as Professor Kent points out, his messages to be appreciated must be felt as well as grasped intellectually: the wider and deeper the spiritual experience of the reader, the greater the understanding and the appreciation of the prophet's thought.

Outline.

I. The Call of Jeremiah, 1.
II. Sermons denouncing Judah's Guilt and declaring Approaching Judgment, 2-17.
III. Symbolic Preaching and Persecution in the Reign of Jehoiakim, 18-20.
IV. Short Exhortations and Prophecies dealing with the Sins of Judah's Kings, 21-24.
V. The Wine Cup of God's Fury, 25.
VI. Jeremiah's Difficulties and Dangers, and Relation to the False Prophets, 26-29.
VII. Restoration from Exile and the New Covenant, 30-33.
VIII. Hezekiah warned, Rechabites commended, 34-35.
IX. Jeremiah's Roll, 36; Appendix to the Roll, 45.
X. Jeremiah's History till his Journey to Egypt, 37.1-43.7.
XI. Prophecies mainly against Foreign Nations, 43.8-51.64.
XII. Historical Appendix, substantially like Chapter Thirty-nine, 65.

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

The Prophet Ezekiel. A younger contemporary of Jeremiah was the prophet Ezekiel, who was born about the time of Josiah's Reforms. He belonged to a family of priests, the son or Buzi, and while receiving his training in priestly ritual the current events, the wickedness and wretchedness of his nation, were doubtless being interpreted to him by the prophet Jeremiah.

Ezekiel was among the first exiles carried into captivity with the young king Jehoiachin in 597 B. C. He settled at Tel-abib, near the Chebar, in the neighborhood of Babylon. Five years later (592) he was called to a position as "watchman" among the exiles (our lesson for October first), and he continued to be their spiritual leader for over twenty years. Though his pastoral work was with this little community, he was a man of broad outlook and wide interests, and he identified his immediate people with the Jewish nation as a whole.

Very unlike in the circumstances of their lives were the two prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Storm and stress were Jeremiah's portion, calm and repose were Ezekiel's. We know and sympathize with Jeremiah; we know little about Ezekiel and do not enter readily into his point of view. To quote Professor Kent's apt words: "Ezekiel's character combined those qualities which fitted him to be a leader of his own and immediately succeeding generations, but

which do not commend him so strongly to the present. That intensity, bordering almost upon insanity, which led him to sit seven days in blank amazement among the Jewish colonists at Tel-abib before delivering his message of denunciation (our lesson for October first), seems incongruous, except in the tense atmosphere of the exile. His language frequently seems mere hyperbole until the situation, which called it forth, is appreciated. His repetitions and minute details are tiresome to one who does not realize how obtuse were his readers."

Reputed Tomb of Ezekiel

How the Book of Ezekiel Was Written. Ezekiel's sermons were first delivered to his countrymen in exile. It was the fashion, he tells us, for them to come and listen to him, his words relieved the monotony of their existence, they talked about them as they stood in the doors of their houses, and he was to them "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument." These sermons he committed to writing even as preachers do now, that they might reach a larger parish, the Jews wherever scattered. His written words show that he meditated long over them, and gave careful thought to their literary form. Throughout he speaks in the first person, humbly referring to himself as the "son of man." Most of his prophecies he dated, the last being 570 B. C.

Its Teachings. Ezekiel enforced the lessons of the Exile, and endeavored to prepare the people for their future destiny. "He was the potter who took up the tools of preceding priests and prophets, and on the wheel of his age molded the external religious life of his race."

The colony on the Chebar consisted largely of men who had belonged to the ruling class at Jerusalem, they were anxiously watching the course of events in Jerusalem and expecting a speedy return to their old place of authority. Ezekiel told them that Judah's desperate struggle for independence was vain, that she must be punished because of her sins. This was unpopular prophecy; "they were impudent and stiff-hearted." When the catastrophe came, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people exiled, Ezekiel was honored as the prophet of the Lord and his words were no longer slighted. In his prophecies of a restoration from captivity he renewed their courage and inspired them with hope.

As Ezekiel's words sometimes resemble those of Jeremiah (Compare Ezek. 3.3 and Jer. 15.16; Ezek. 3.17 and Jer. 6.17; Ezek. 14.14 and Jer. 15.1; Ezek. 22.30 and Jer. 5.1), so his teachings are like some of Jeremiah's. Prominent thoughts are the glory and holiness of God, His justice and mercy, and the responsibility of the individual, his need of repentance.

Its Style. The tone of the earlier prophecies is stern and grim, of the later more kindly and comforting. Jeremiah was from a priestly family, and he lived in the city of the temple, but his writings are without ecclesiastical phraseology. Ezekiel's writings from the land where there was no temple show the priest; they contain frequent references to the ceremonial institutions of the temple, and it is largely due to him that legalism gained the ascendency which it held for centuries.

Vivid is the prophet's imagination and most striking is his use of symbolic imagery. The book abounds in symbolic figures—metaphors, parables and allegory—symbolic actions and grand visions. His symbolic pictures are at times rude, even grotesque, but as Dr. W. G. Jordan points out, though this wealth of oriental imagery may be foreign to our taste, it was very dear to good men in those days, and has exerted a wonderful influence over later

literature, and still in indirect ways it molds the thoughts of men concerning death and judgment.

Wonderful are the prophets' visions of the Chariot and Cherubim upbearing the shadowy form of Jehovah; of the valley of dry bones; and of the river of life, that proceeds from the temple of God, our lesson for October eighth. When in his vision of the life-giving stream he brings us out upon the Dead Sea "and we watch the fishing boats that move along its western shores; when he shows us trees whose leaves and fruit are deathless, that fringe the wonderful river on both its banks; then we feel that we are in the hands of a great poet, who looked with eyes of love and hope upon the world, and who saw deep into the heart of things."

Outline of the Book.

I. Ezekiel's Ministry of Reproof, 1-24.
   1. His Vision and Commission, 1-3.
   2. Prophecies concerning the Certainty and Necessity of the Fall of Jerusalem, 4-24.

II. Ezekiel's Ministry of Consolation, 25-48.
   1. Removal of Enemies: Prophecies against Foreign Nations, 25-32.
   2. Prophecies of Restoration, 33-39.
   3. Ecclesiastical Organization of the Community, 40-48.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Prophet Daniel. Ezekiel 14.14, 20 refers to Daniel together with Noah and Job as an example of a man noted for his righteousness. The connection of Daniel's name with the name of Noah and Job seems singular if the reference is to the prophet who according to the book of Daniel was a contemporary of the prophet Ezekiel himself.

Daniel in the Book bearing his name was a descendant of one of the highest families in Judah (1.3), who was carried captive to Babylon when but a boy according to Jerome—in the third year of Jehoiakim, 605 B. C. There he was educated, gained favor with king Nebuchadnezzar, and was appointed by him governor of the province of Babylon. Under Nebuchadnezzar's immediate successors we lose sight of him till the time of Belshazzar. He lived till the reign of Cyrus the Great. A tomb in Susa is claimed by Mohammedans to be his tomb.

The Author of the Book of Daniel. The Book takes its name from that of its hero. The first or narrative part is written in the third person, the hero is spoken of historically; the visions of the last part are those of Daniel, narrated in the first person, but twice introduced by a verse in the third person, 7.1 and 10.1. It does not seem that Daniel was the author of the Book nor that the unknown prophet who wrote it intended it to be read as the work of Daniel.

Views in Regard to the Book. By some scholars the book is considered wholly historical and written at the time of the events narrated. Other scholars hold that its basis is historical, but that it was written perhaps four centuries after the events and revised so as to meet the needs of that time when under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes the Jews were passing through furnaces of affliction. As early as the third century of our era Porphyry maintained that the book was written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. By yet other scholars it is considered a *mashal* or parable written for didactic purposes.

There are difficulties connected with each of these points of view. Some troublesome historical statements that have seemed erroneous and have led many to reject the Book have been satisfactorily explained by recent discoveries in ancient inscriptions. Those connected with our lessons from the Book are there discussed.

The visions that occupy the second half of the Book are different from those of other Old Testament Prophets. They have little bearing on Daniel's circumstances in Babylon, and are remarkably circumstantial and minute as regards the distant future. If the Book dates from the close of the period to which its visions refer, the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, then the visions

are "past history thrown by the author into the guise of ancient prediction." Then, the unknown prophet chose this method as a forcible way in which to express his truth that everything that had happened was in accord with divine foreknowledge and purpose. In the Hebrew Bible the Book is placed, not with the prophetical books, but with "the Writings," between Esther and Ezra. It is written in two languages, 1.1-2.4a and 8-12 being in Hebrew and 2.4b-7.26 in Aramaic.

Teachings of the Book. The truth in regard to the date of the Book may never be known, but the truth of its vividly taught lessons need never be lost. It is emphatically "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In Daniel we have the example of fidelity to the dictates of conscience no matter what the consequences, and of sublime faith in God and in His overruling care, that all should emulate. The book is, moreover, as Dean Stanley says, "the first essay at a philosophy of history." And in the words of another, "We can here read the great lessons that God

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presides over the history of the world; that the Gentile nations as well as the Jews have always been under His control; that the succession of human empires is ordained by Him; that He permits the pride and fury of oppressors for a time, but humbles then in the end, and saves His own; that His kingdom will come at length and will endure forever, that faithfulness and constancy to Him lead to a life beyond death, and to an eternal reward."

The Style of the Book. The two parts are very different. The six stories about Daniel and his fellow-exiles in Babylon are simply told, while the visions of the second part are more rhetorical. Peculiar to the Book are its symbolism, imagery, angels, the sense of mystery that pervades it.

Outline.

I. Narrative Section. Experiences of Daniel and his Companions, 1-6.
   1. In the Reign of Nebuchadnezzar, 1-4.
   2. In the Reign of Belshazzar, 5.
   3. In the Reign of Darius the Mede. 6.

II. Prophetical Section, Four Visions, 7-12.
1. The Four Beasts, 7.
2. The Ram and the Goat, 8.
3. The Seventy Weeks, 9.
4. The Kings of the North and South, 10-12.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

The Value of the Book. "This apparently trivial book is one of the deepest and grandest that was ever written, and I should like to say to every one who approaches it, 'take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' In this book Israelitic prophecy quits the scene of battle as victor, and is victor in its severest struggle—that against self." This is the opinion of Professor Cornill. "There is no single piece of literature of the entire Old Testament which is more artistic in its form, more pedagogical in its method, or more logical in its thought," writes the Editor of the Biblical World.

The Subject of the Book. The prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, a native of Gath-hepher, is the subject of the Book. His prediction of the extension of the kingdom from the Orontes to the Dead Sea, 2 K. 14.25 was fulfilled in the reign of Jeroboam II, or 781-740. If, as is generaly assumed, his prediction was also uttered in that reign, he followed Elijah and Elisha as prophet.

The Author of the Book. Jonah, the son of Amittai, is the subject of the Book, but not its author. The Book makes no statement as to its authorship or date. Whoever the author was, he has written with great vividness and dramatic power, and must have been an artist as well as prophet.

The Date of the Book. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, we read in 3.3. Had it been great at the time of the writing of the Book, the past tense would not have been used. Nineveh was practically destroyed in 607 B. C., hence we must conclude that the Book was not written till after that date; perhaps a much longer time intervened between the life of the prophet Jonah and that of the prophet who wrote the Book of Jonah. The Hebrew is of late origin, and many scholars assign it to the period following reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. At that time Jewish narrowness had grown intense. The little group of exiles made every effort to strengthen themselves in the land against the peoples of many races with which their land had been filled by the Babylonians. They rebuilt the temple, extended its ritual, emphasized the dignity of the priesthood and the severe laws of the Sabbath, enjoined the putting away of the Gentile wives among them, and in every possible manner intensified their exclusiveness.

In such a time as this there came to the writer of the book of Jonah a marvelous revelation of the fact that Jehovah is God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and of the call of the Jews to make Him known to the Gentiles. These truths he taught his countrymen in conection with the story of the prophet Jonah.

The Story. We may divide the four chapters into four parts:—
I. Jonah's Commission, Disobedience, and Punishment, 1.1-16.
II. Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance, 1.17-2.10.
III. Jonah's Obedience and the Result, 3.1-10.
IV. Jonah's Complaint and Rebuke, 4.1-11.

God commanded the prophet Jonah to carry a warning message to the heathen in Nineveh. Jonah feared that God would repent of His purpose and spare Nineveh, (4.2), and he rebelled. In foolish flight he went in the opposite direction, at Joppa found a ship bound for Tarshish—the Phœnician colony on the southwest of Spain, then regarded as the very end of the earth—and went aboard. God sent a violent storm, the sailors concluded that some one had offended his god, and they cast lots to discover the culprit. The lot fell upon Jonah, and he acknowledged his guilt and advised them to throw him into the sea. Finding their efforts to row back to land unavailing, the sailors prayed to the Lord and then reluctantly cast Jonah overboard. The sea ceased from its raging and the sailors feared the Lord. The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish

three days and three nights. His prayer during that time is recorded. At the command of the Lord the fish cast Jonah out upon dry land.

God repeated his command and this time the prophet answered and humbly obeyed. He went to Nineveh and preached, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It was a great city, so great that it took three days to pass through it: when the prophet had gone only a third of the way the people, from the king to the lowliest subject, believed his message, and at the king's proclamation they all—even the domestic animals—fasted. In sackcloth and ashes they cried unto God, hoping that He would change His purpose and spare them. Their repentance was accepted by God.

Jonah was very angry. He told the Lord that this was what he had feared when he fled to Tarshish. "I knew that Thou are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil," he said, therefore—(since I am discredited as a prophet, and the distinction of Israel as the only people of God is to be taken away, their enemies, the Ninevites, are to share in the rights of the children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob)—I beseech Thee, "take my life from me." "Doest thou well to be angry;" questioned God. Then the angry prophet went without the city, and built a booth under which to sit and see what should happen. By divine appointment three things happened: a gourd grew up in a night and shaded Jonah, a worm attacked it the next day and it withered, and a sultry east wind beat upon the prophet's head till he again asked that he might die. "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" questioned God, and the sulking prophet answered, "I do well to be angry even unto death." "You have regard for the gourd which you neither made nor caused to grow; and shall I not have regard for the great city of Nineveh with its many thonsands of little children and much cattle?" is the lesson God taught his rebellious prophet.

Two Views in Regard to the Book. One view is that the writer merely recorded history just as it literally occurred. Another view is that he sought by means of a didactic narrative, a dramatically told story woven around the life of the prophet Jonah, to teach certain great truths.

As an allegory of Israel's history it is thus interpreted by Professor Eiselen in "The Minor Prophets": Israel had received a divine commission to make known Jehovah to all the earth (Isa. 43.5-9; Gen. 12.3), but Israel was disobedient and failed to carry out the divine purpose, and in consequence was swallowed up by the "monster." In exile Israel turned to Jehovah, then Israel was delivered from the "monster." The duration of Israel's judgment is represented by Hosea as lasting three days.

While the exile brought the Israelites, in some measure, to their senses, they were not entirely cured. Their mission was not revoked; it remained their duty to carry the knowledge of Jehovah to the ends of the earth. But Israel remained silent. There were many who were thinking of the nations as doomed; they were displeased because the threats of the pre-exilic period remained unfulfilled. To teach such the folly and wickedness of their attitude is the aim of chapters 3, 4.

Dr. George Adam Smith points out that the abrupt close of the story at the very moment at which its moral is obvious, is characteristic of all parables, and adds: "So obvious and so natural are the symptoms of the parable, that we really sin against the intention of the author, and the purpose of the Spirit who inspired him, when we willfully interpret the book as real history."

In a recent story of Ingraham Lovell the heroine, who has grown to womanhood in complete seclusion, is told for the first time the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. She cannot grasp its lesson, and is greatly excited over what she calls the unfairness of the householder until she is informed that "it was not an actual occurrence, but merely a parable—a lesson!" "Oh, it never happened, then?" she exclaims. "So of course it does not matter." We, who have always known that Christ's parables were not actual occurrences, can see the beauty and force and truth of their teachings. Why should we not see the same in an Old Testament parable? Why should we think, if the story of Jonah is not an actual occurrence, "then, of course, it does not matter," and spurn its lessons because it did not all literally happen?

Truth is greater than a particular truth. If the parable of the Prodigal Son referred to a definitely known youth in Jerusalem, then it would be a partic-

ular truth; but infinitely greater than this is the truth of the parable which does refer to the life of humanity in all ages and lands.

The Teaching of the Book. How the truth is embodied in the Book is of secondary importance: what the truth is is of primary consequence. Whether history or story, prosaic fact or poetic allegory, it is a wonderful book, anticipating as it does in the Old Testament the Gospel of Christ. Wonderful is its conception of the tender mercy of God ,and of His love for all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, children as well as grown people, and extending even to the dumb brute creation. It is also the great missionary book of the Old Testament. Throughout there is the call to service. As Jonah was called to serve his people's enemy, so the call comes "to all who know for all who do not know" the love and mercy of the Lord.

You have seen a double rainbow: the one bow bright and clear, the other back of it fainter and dimmer, but a beautiful reflection of the same glorious colorings. The book of Jonah is the dimmer bow that nevertheless reflects the great truth so clearly seen in the bright bow of the Gospels, where we hear that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

The Prophet Malachi. We know nothing about Malachi. The name means "My messenger," and some scholars believe that the title of the Book was taken from the most striking prophecy of the book, the first verse of the third chapter.

The Date of the Book. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied in connection with the building of the temple. Malachi evidently prophesied in connection with the reforms of Nehemiah. The reference to the "governor" of Judah, 1.6, indicates that Judah was at this time a province of the Persian Empire; the temple has long since been rebuilt; the evils denounced are the same as those with which Nehemiah contended.

Its Teachings. The temple and its services were the center of the religious life, and the sins of priests and people that the prophet denounces are the unpaid tithes, imperfectly fulfilled vows, disobedience to the ritual precepts of the Law, the shirking or indifferent observance of the sacrificial functions of the priests. But with the gloom of the worship at Jerusalem there are gleams of the universal worship of a changeless God and Father: From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles, 1.11; Have we not one father? hath not one God created us? 2.10. The prophet has faith that upon the faithful "the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." He remembers Moses and expects Elijah; he looks back to the great past and forward to a greater future.

Its Style. Save for the bright flashes here and there the Book has rather a scholastic air, an argumentative, matter-of-fact way of putting things. The regular formula is first a statement of a principle or a denunciation, then an imaginary objection from those addressed, followed by the prophet's refutation of their objections and his warning or promise.

Outline of the Book

I. Introductory; God's special Love for His People, 1.1-5.
II. Sins of Priests and People, 1.6-2.17.
III. Judgment, Promises, Entreaties and Rebukes, 3.1-4.3.
IV. Conclusion, 4.4-8.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES

Our lessons extend from the Division of the Monarchy in 937 B. C. to the reforms of Nehemiah after the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, about 450 B. C., thus covering a period of about five hundred years.

The chronology of this period given in the margins of our King James' Version was worked out by Archbishop Ussher in the seventeenth century of our era. Excavations in the East have since brought to light data showing that Ussher's system was incorrect; his figures for the early period are too high. His dates have been omitted from the margins of our Revised Version.

KINGS AND PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Biblical chronology is a most intricate subject about which scholars do not agree. For convenience of reference the following tables are given, which are based on the chronology of Hasting's Dictionary.

Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah

Israel 937-722 B. C. Judah 937-586 B. C.

B. C.	Kings of Israel.	Kings of Judah.	Prophets' Public Ministry.
937	Jeroboam I.	Rehoboam.	
932		Invasion of Shishak.	
920		Abijam.	
917		Asa.	
915	Nadab.		
913	Baasha.		
889	Elah.		
887	Zimri.		
887	Omri.		
876		Jehoshaphat.	
875	Ahab.		
860-852			Elijah.
855-798			Elisha.
853	Ahaziah.		
851	Joram.	Jehoram.	
843		Ahaziah.	
842	Jehu.	Athaliah.	
842	Tribute to Shalmaneser.		
836		Joash.	
814	Jehoahaz.		
810		Tribute paid to Hazael.	
797	Jehoash.		
796		Amaziah.	
782		Uzziah.	
781	Jeroboam II.		
			Jonah, *2 K.* 14.25.
760-750			Amos.
750-737			Hosea.
740-700			Isaiah.
740	Zechariah.		
740	Shallum.		
738	Menahen.		
738	Tribute paid to Tiglath-pileser.		
737		Jotham. (Co-regent with Uzziah, 751-737.)	
735	Pekahiah.	Ahaz.	
735	Pekah.		
733	Hoshea.		
725		Hezekiah.	
724			Micah.
722	Fall of Samaria and end of the Kingdom of Israel.		
686		Manasseh.	
641		Ammon.	
639		Josiah.	
627			Zephaniah.
626-586			Jeremiah.
621		Josiah's Reformation.	
610-608			Nahum.
608		Jehoahaz.	
608		Jehoiakim.	
608		Battle of Megiddo.	
606			Daniel carried into Captivity.
605		Battle of Carchemish.	
605-600			Habakkuk.
597		Jehoiachin.	
597		First Babylonian Captivity. Prophet Ezekiel among the Exiles.	
597		Zedekiah.	
592-570			Ezekiel.
586		Destruction of Jerusalem by Babylonians. Exile.	

Important Dates After the Exile

B. C.	
538	Decree of Cyrus permitting the return of the Exiles.
	Zerubbabel governor of Judah.
536	Foundation of temple laid.
520	Building of second temple resumed.
520-516	Public ministry of Haggai and Zechariah.
516	Second temple completed.
460-440	Public ministry of Malachi.
458	Return of second group of exiles under Ezra.
445	Nehemiah governor of Jerusalem.
	Walls of Jerusalem rebuilt.
432	Second visit of Nehemiah to Jerusalem.

Last Kings of the Assyrian Empire

B. C.	
745	Tilgath-pileser IV.
732	Rezon, King of Syria, slain and Damascus taken by the Assyrians.
727	Shalmaneser IV.
722	Sargon.
722	Fall of Samaria and End of Kingdom of Israel.
705	Sennacherib.
701	Invasion of Judah.
681	Esarhaddon.
668	Ashurbanipal.
626	Ashuretililani.
	Sinsharishkun.
606	Fall of Nineveh.

Kings of the New Babylonian Empire

626	Nabopolassar.
605	Battle of Carchemish.
604	Nebuchadnezzar.
604	Daniel carried into captivity.
592-570	Public ministry of Prophet Ezekiel.
586	Fall of Jerusalem.
561	Evil Merodach.
559	Neriglissar.
556	Labashi Merodach.
555	Nabonidus.
549	Beginning of Cyrus' victorious career.
538	Babylonian Empire conquered by Cyrus.

Kings of the Persian Empire

539	Cyrus.
538	Return of Exiles to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.
536	Foundations of temple laid, Ezra 3.8.
529	Cambyses.
522	Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis).
521	Darius I (Darius-Hystaspis).
520	Building of second temple resumed.
520	Prophets Haggai and Zechariah.
516	Completion of second temple.
485	Xerxes (Ahasuerus).
464	Artaxerxes I (Artaxerxes Longimanus).
460-450	Prophet Malachi.
458	Return of second group of exiles under Ezra.
445	Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem.
424	Xerxes II (Sogdianus).
423	Darius II (Darius Nothus).
404	Artaxerxes II (Artaxerxes Mnemon).
358	Artaxerxes III (Artaxerxes Ochus).
337	Arses.
335	Darius III (Darius Codomanus).
331	Persia conquered by Alexander.

FIRST QUARTER

LESSON I—JANUARY 1

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED

Golden Text

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Prov. 13.20.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 12.1-24. The Kingdom Divided. **T.** 1 Sam. 8.10-22. The "Manner of the King" Predicted. **W.** 1 Kings 10.1-29. The "Manner of the King" Verified. **T.** 1 Kings 11.26-40. The Prophecy of Ahijah, the Shilonite. **F.** Prov. 4.1-19. Avoiding Evil Counsel. **S.** Prov. 15.20-33. The Wise Hearkeneth to Reproof. **S.** Ps. 1.1-6. Walking not in the Counsel of the Wicked.—*Selected by the Sunday-School Editorial Association.* See p. 16.

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 12.1-24 PRINT vv. 6-16 COMMIT vv. 13-14.

6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people? 7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him. 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us lighter? 10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou speak unto them, My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, 14 and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

See page 16. 1-24. Read the preceding passage, 1 K. chapter 11, and the parallel passage, 2 Ch. 10.1-11.4.

1. *Rehoboam.* The son of Solomon.—*All Israel.* Representatives of all Israel.—*Were come to Shechem to make him king.* Saul and David had been made kings by representatives of the people, while Solomon had been chosen by his father to succeed him. Precedent had not yet decreed that the throne was hereditary. This verse seems to indicate that Rehoboam had to go to Shechem to be proclaimed king, but, as we infer from an account preserved in the Septuagint, he was doubtless crowned at Jerusalem upon the death of his father (1 K. 11.43), and went afterwards to Shechem to have his sovereignty acknowledged by the tribes who were on the verge of a revolt.

2. *Heard of it.* Heard of the death of Solomon, not of the assembly at Shechem. Jeroboam had fled from the presence of king Solomon. The reason is given in 1 K. 11.26-40.

3. *Jeroboam came and spake unto Rehoboam.* Here and in v. 12 Jeroboam is the spokesman, but because of his former revolt he would be *persona non grata* to the king, and therefore an unsuitable one to make the appeal for redress of grievances. Possibly Jeroboam spoke through others, but did not himself appear till afterwards; see verse 20.

4. *Thy father made our yoke grievous.* Intolerable. The yoke was an emblem of servitude: compare Jesus' words in Mt. 11.30. The people were heavily taxed and forced labor was required. Recall Samuel's prophecy when the people demanded their first king, 1 Sam. 8.10-18, and read 1 K. 4.7, 22-26; 19.15 to see how Solomon's extravagant court and his immense buildings must have impoverished the people.

6. *The old men that had stood before Solomon.* Some of their names are given in 1 K. 4.1-6. *To stand before a king* means to be in his service.

7. *If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day.* They seem to counsel a temporary policy, fair promises rather than actual fair dealing.

8. *The young men that were grown up with him.* They were young as compared with the old men who had grown up with his father Solomon, but Rehoboam was at this time forty-one years old according to 1 K. 14.21, though the Septuagint Version gives his age as twenty-one (one version as sixteen). He and his companions were certainly young in wisdom if not in years.

10. *My little finger is thicker than my father's loins.* This was a proverbial expression, and means, as used by Rehoboam, I am as much greater than my father, and my demands will be as much greater than his, as the thigh is bigger than the little finger.

11. *Scorpions.* This word is usually interpreted to mean a lash used in scourging, having sharp stones or metal points whose sting probably gave it this name. "The same name is said to have been given by the Romans to an implement of flagellation. It is described by Ephrem Syrus as a long bag of leather, stuffed with sand, and provided with spikes" (*Skinner*). The whole expression is plainly a figure of speech, and the comparison evidently means that the suffering his father caused may be compared to a blow with a small whip, while the suffering he will cause will be as severe as the sting of a scorpion.

12. *All the people.* Representatives of all the people.—*As the king bade.* Verse 5.

15. *A thing brought about of Jehovah.* In Hebrew thought, every unusual occurrence was brought about by the direct agency of God. See p. 45.—*Jehovah.* The Authorized Version translates the Hebrew "Yahweh" by "the LORD," which is not a proper name of the Supreme Being, being applied in England to a titled nobleman, and also to any one in authority, as when Shakespeare says, But now I am the lord of this fair mansion. Jewish superstition regarded the divine name "Yahweh" (Jehovah) too sacred to be uttered or written in full, but our Revisers said that such a superstition ought no longer to dominate the English or any other version of the Old Testament.—*Which Jehovah spake by Ahijah.* See 1 K. 11.11-13, 26-40.

16. *Israel.* Here the ten northern tribes.—*Saying.* Compare the similar

words of Sheba, 2 Sam. 20.1—*What portion have we in David?* Rehoboam was David's grandson; the jealousy of the northern tribes toward the tribe of Judah, David's tribe, had smouldered during the reigns of David and Solomon, and now it openly broke forth.—*Son of Jesse.* David.—*To your tents, O Israel.* Let us forswear allegiance to Rehoboam, go home, and manage our own affairs. They no longer lived in tents, but they used the old phrase of dismissal dating from the nomad days.—*Now see to thine own house, David.* Look out for yourselves, but let us alone.

18. *Rehoboam sent Adoram who was over the men subject to task-work.* Rehoboam was evidently trying to carry out his threat of verse 14, for the last man who could have prevailed with them must have been this task-master. As Matthew Henry says, Having foolishly thrown himself into the quicksand, he sank the further in, with plunging to get out.

19. *Unto this day.* This phrase shows that the record as it stands was not written at the time the events occurred, but it must have been written originally before the fall of Samaria. See p. 21 of the Introduction to this Guide.

20. *The tribe of Judah only.* In the next verse and elsewhere Benjamin is reckoned with Judah. The territory of Benjamin was really divided between Israel and Judah, Jerusalem falling to Judah and Bethel and Jericho to Israel. Simeon, whose territory was south of Judah, was practically identified with Judah, and the Levites in the northern kingdom very soon came to Jerusalem. See map p. 65.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

See page 17.

6. *Solomon his father.* Louis XV, when some one remonstrated with him on the state of feeling which he had aroused by draining France to glorify Paris, replied, "It will last my time." A similar thought must surely have come at times to the "Wise" King of Israel, as the blundering and incompetent character of his son disclosed itself. *John Kelman,* in *The Holy Land.*

15. *It was a thing brought about of Jehovah.* Here the historian draws back the curtain. On earth stood the insolent king and the now mutinous people, each driving at their ends, and neither free of sin in their selfishness. A stormy scene of passion, without thought of God, rages below, and above sits the Lord, working His great purpose by men's sin. That divine control does not in the least affect the freedom or the guilt of the actors. Rehoboam's disregard of the people's terms was a thing brought about of the Lord, but it was Rehoboam's sin none the less. That which, looked at from the mere human side, is the sinful result of the free playing of wrong motives, is, when regarded from the divine side, the determinate counsel of God. The greatest crime in the world's history was at the same time the accomplishment of God's most merciful purpose. Calvary is the highest example of the truth, which embraces all lesser instances of the wrath of man, which He makes to praise Him and effect His deep designs. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Expositions of Scripture.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

See page 17.

9. *The yoke that thy father did put upon us.* Forced labor was a part of Solomon's yoke. We are much interested in our "Great Ditch" and we know what expense and pains were taken to make conditions sanitary and safe for men engaged in its construction. It was only a little over forty years ago, however, that the Suez Canal was completed, and it was dug with little thought for the workmen, chiefly by the forced labor of the fellahin, the lowest class of laborers in Egypt.

In a deep rock cutting high above the railway that now leads to Damascus, a Latin inscription praises the Roman Emperor and the Prefect under whose auspices the ancient aqueduct and chariot-road were constructed, but beneath, in differently shaped letters which were evidently filled in with cement and concealed from that Prefect's eyes, are two words that speak volumes—*Impensis Abilenetorum,* At the cost of the people of Abilene!

10. *And the young men that were grown up with him.* Dr. Clarke points out that it was customary in various countries to educate with the heir to the

throne young noblemen of nearly the same age. This accomplished two purposes: "It excited the prince to emulation, that he might, as far as possible, surpass in their manly exercises, and in all acts of prudence and virtue, those whom one day he was to surpass in the elevation and dignity of his state: and also that he might acquire a correct knowledge of the disposition and views of those who were likely to be, under him, the highest officers of the state, and know the better how to trust and employ them. The old counsellors Rehoboam did not know, with the young nobility he had been familiar."

13. *The king forsook the counsel of the old men.* Rehoboam thereby sinned against custom. In the East vastly greater reverence has always been paid to age than in the West. At the present time it is the old men who settle affairs of state in the Arab tribes.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

See page 17.

Genesis, the first Book of the Bible, begins with accounts of the creation, temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, offerings of Cain and Abel, and the flood. With the journey of Abraham from Ur of Chaldea up the Euphrates Valley and across the Jordan, and his settlement with his company in Southern Canaan, begins the history of the Israelites, the Chosen People of God.

Then we read about Abraham's son Isaac, the peace-loving man who would rather keep on digging wells than have a fuss with the men who stopped them up; next about Isaac's son Jacob, the tricky Hebrew who gained his brother Esau's birthright, whose name was changed to Israel because he prevailed with the angel by the ford Jabbok. The fourth in line of the great patriarchs was Joseph, who was sold by his jealous brothers into slavery in Egypt, who was taken into Potiphar's house, from there to prison, and then after his interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream was made second only unto that ruler in his realm. You recall how Joseph's brothers were led by a famine to go to Egypt for corn, and how they all came eventually with their aged father Jacob and settled in the land of Egypt.

Years passed and there sat on the throne a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, who made the Israelites slaves and oppressed them grievously. At last Moses led them out of Egypt. You recall the crossing of the Red Sea, and the forty years of life in the wilderness, where the ten commandments were given to the people and when they murmured so constantly, that stiff-necked and rebellious generation as Moses called them, that only two of the original number survived to enter the promised land, Joshua and Caleb. Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan, captured Jericho, and divided the land of Canaan among the twelve tribes, the descendants of the sons of Jacob. Then followed the reigns of the Judges, when there was almost constant warfare with the Philistines, and when "each man did that which was right in his own eyes." Order was secured under Samuel, the last of the Judges, and the first of the long line of great prophets.

Samuel grew old and feeble, his sons were worthless fellows, unfit to succeed him, the people looked with envy on their neighbors who gloried in their kings, a strong man was needed to fight their battles with the Philistines, and they came to Samuel and demanded a king. Samuel told them that they were ruled by God, and that they would suffer great hardships at the hands of earthly kings. "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you," he told them. "He will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your flocks; and ye shall be his servants. And you shall

cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you; and Jehovah will not answer you in that day."

Despite this dark picture, the people persisted in their demand for a king, and Samuel yielded. Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was chosen as the first king. Saul started out well, but he ended ingloriously. Samuel saw that he was a failure, and he sought the family of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, and anointed his youngest son, David, the shepherd lad. David knew that he was set apart for a great service, but he was content to await God's appointed time. Saul became insanely jealous of David, and the account of his forty years' reign is largely occupied with his pursuit of David. At length the old enemy of the Israelites, the Philistines, made a well-planned attack upon them on Mount Gilboa and defeated them. In that battle Saul and his son Jonathan were slain. David was at once made king over his tribe of Judah at Hebron, and when seven years later he was made king over the other tribes also, the leadership passed to the tribe of Judah. David fills a larger space in Hebrew history than any other man but Moses and Christ. Later generations looked back to him as the model king. By conquest he extended his empire from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, making the Philistines on the west and the Edomites, Moabites, Aramæans and others east of the Jordan pay tribute to him.

In these brief words we have covered the history of the Israelites for a thousand years. Abraham lived about 2000 B. C., and David about 1000 B. C.

2000 B. C.	1000 B. C.	1 A. D.	1000 A. D.	2000 A. D.
Abraham	David	Christ	Crusades	1911

After forty years' reign, David died and was succeeded by his son Solomon. Under this great king Samuel's prophecy was fulfilled. The people were heavily taxed to support his magnificent court and large army, forced labor was demanded to erect his vast palaces and fortifications, and during the latter part of his reign rebellion was rife. Jeroboam, a humble man in the tribe of Ephraim, came to Jerusalem and his intelligence and enterprise gained him an important place in Solomon's building force. He was placed over the levy of his own tribe, who were engaged in building the fortifications of Millo. Anger at their oppression and ambition for his own advancement, led him to head a revolt.

Meanwhile the prophet Ahijah came to him with a startling message. Taking a new piece of cloth, the prophet tore it into twelve pieces and handed ten of them to Jeroboam. This symbolic act meant, as he explained, that Israel was to be punished for neglecting God, the kingdom would be divided after Solomon's death, and Jeroboam should rule over ten tribes. Unlike David, Jeroboam could not await the appointed time. The revolt was quelled, and Jeroboam was forced to flee to Egypt where he was well received by Shishak, the ruler.

Solomon died and was succeeded by his son Rehoboam. And who knoweth whether he will be a wise man, or a fool? as Ecclesiastes questions. Our lesson shows us that he was far from being a wise man, and that his arrogant folly was the immediate cause, the last straw, one might say, that brought about the division of the kingdom. The result of the division is given at the close of "The Lesson Briefly Told."

Supposed Representation of Rehoboam. From the Temple at Karnak. Inscription: Judhamalek (King of Judah)

A deeper lying cause of the disruption than Rehoboam's folly lay in the northern tribes' jealousy of Judah, for whose aggrandizement all their labor at Jerusalem went. This jealousy was of long standing, and the two kingdoms had never been one at heart. In early Hebrew history the northern tribes were the leaders. In the time of the Judges a strong line of Canaanitish strongholds, of which Jebus (later Jerusalem), was the chief, extended east and west across the

land of Canaan, separating the two. The Ephraimites, as representing the tribe of Joseph (which had been divided into the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh in order to secure for it a double portion in the original distribution of the land) had long claimed pre-eminence. Within its territory was Shiloh, the early sanctuary. When David became king the sanctuary was removed to Jerusalem and the supremacy passed to Judah. There were fitful outbursts of jealousy during David's reign, but it was kept in check by the enthusiasm engendered by his military enterprises and by his powerful and diplomatic rule. It grew stronger during Solomon's reign, for his interest was centered in Jerusalem and Judah.

A date in the Assyrian inscriptions, 854 B. C., falls within Ahab's reign, and this makes the time of the division into two kingdoms somewhere between 938 B. C. and 916 B. C. (the sixty-two years' reign of Ahab's predecessors being added either to the beginning or to the end of his twenty-two years' reign). The date usually accepted is 937 B. C. In regard to Usshur's chronology in King James' version, see p. 40 of this Guide.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Jerusalem was the capital of the United Kingdom. *Shechem,* the place where the great convocation was held, was on the high road, twenty-nine miles north of Jerusalem, at the foot of Mount Gerezim. Notice on the diagram that it was about in the center of the land west of the Jordan.

From the time when Abraham came to the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh, till Jesus held His conversation with the woman of Sychar not far from Shechem, it is an important place in Biblical History.

Israel and Judah After the Division

After the division, the territory of Israel was nearly three times as large as that of Judah (Israel, 9,400 sq. miles, Judah 3,400). West of the Jordan it included the territory of the tribe of Benjamin to within a few miles of Jerusalem, and Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulum, Naphtali, Dan and Asher, extending as far north as Mount Hermon: east of the Jordan it included the tribes of Reuben and Gad and suzerainty over the territory of Moab. Its land was far more fertile than Judah's; to it belonged the rich plain of Jezreel and the wooded hills of Ephraim and Carmel. Its highways were traversed by traders from the adjacent lands, and its prosperous people were fond of luxuries.

Judah fell heir to the nominal control of Edom and to the wealth of Jerusalem and the military resources accumulated during David's and Solomon's reigns, and to the renown that belonged to the house of David. Small in extent, in close touch with the desert rather than with adjoining nations, it was politically of far less importance than the northern kingdom, and its rocky, barren hills produced an austere people.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

See page 17.

This lesson can be made very vivid to little people. Describe the scene at Jerusalem where the men were made to work hard in building the wall and tell about Jeroboam, their leader in this work. Let your pupils see the prophet Ahijah as he drew Jeroboam aside to tell him that he should be king over the ten tribes (1 K. 11.26-40). Tear a piece of cloth into twelve parts and show what he did as you tell his message. Then describe the great meeting at Shechem so that your pupils can see it. Tell in dialogue form the conversation between the king and the gray-haired old men, then between the king and the younger men, and then between the king and the people. Portray the scene of excitement as the people from the north departed, refusing to have Rehoboam for their king. Make them see that had Rehoboam listened to the old

men who knew much more than he did, or, what would have been far better, had he asked God what to do, he would not have spoken so roughly to his people, would have promised to make their burdens lighter instead of harder, and would not have lost the greater part of his kingdom. Tell them the story of Wilhelmina as a little girl, p. 50, and impress upon them the lesson the Queen Mother taught, and let them see how much Rehoboam needed to learn this lesson when he was a young boy. Tell the story of the quarrel among the five fingers, p. 51. Give each pupil a copy of the four line stanza, p. 50, to take home and commit.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

See page 18.

For Younger Pupils. When Queen Victoria was seventeen years old she was told that she was to become Queen of England. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "Won't you pray for me that I may be wise and good?" We hear to-day about a man who was to become king. What was his name? Over what people was he to be king? Did he want to be wise and good so that he could rule wisely and justly?

For Older Pupils. In order to understand aright the people, the place, and the time with which our year's study begins, let us briefly recount the leading events in the early life of the Children of Israel. (By questions secure from pupils the information given in The Historical Background.)

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I A Bit of Advice

See page 18.

Rehoboam's Mistakes. Solomon's early prayer, when God appeared to him in a dream by night and asked what He should give him, was: Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people? Had this been the prayer of his son Rehoboam on ascending the throne, the northern tribes would not have revolted. But Rehoboam had no wish to discern between good and evil; he believed in "the divine rights of kings" to govern their realms as despots.

Rehoboam's first mistake was in asking the advice of any one. His own heart should have told him that the request of the people was just and right, and instead of asking for three days' delay he should have answered at once, "I will make your yoke lighter." The people would have made the valley ring with their joyous shouts and "Hail to the King!" It is always a mistake to consult others about a plain duty.

His second mistake was in following the wrong advice. He turned from the counsel of the old men to that of the young men which was in harmony with his own desires—to get all he could and give nothing.

Be Ready to take Advice. Youth often scorns advice, especially the advice of old age. Young people are inclined to think of old people as old fogies. Some of them may be, but there is a wisdom that comes only with experience, and the advice of most old people is worthy of consideration. They have traveled over the ground and have learned how best to meet its dangers and surprises. There may be bitter regret in store for some one who will one day say with Proverbs: How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof, neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me.

Go to the Best Source for Advice. Our Golden Text says: He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Said an English judge: If I had listened when I was young to the advice of some who called themselves my friends, instead of being a judge of the king's bench I should have died long ago a prisoner in the king's jail.

Ponder these words of the Rev. F. B. Meyer: If in all times of discouragement and vicissitude we could have access to one of the wisest and noblest of our fellow-creatures, or to some venerated departed saint, or to the guardian angel deputed to attend our steps, or to the archangel that presides as vicegerent over this system of worlds, how strong and brave we should become!

Whatever our need, we would at once seek his august presence, and obtain his counsel and assistance. How extraordinary is our behavior, then, with respect to prayer, that we make so little of our opportunities of access into the presence of our Father, in whom wisdom, power and love blend perfectly, and who is always willing to hear us—nay, is perpetually urging us to come!

New Year's Advice.

I asked the New Year for some motto sweet—
Some rule of life by which to guide my feet;
I asked and paused. It answered soft and low,
"God's will to know."

"Will knowledge, then, suffice, New Year? I cried,
But ere the question into silence died
The answer came: "Nay, this remember too—
God's will to do."

Once more I asked: "Is there still more to tell?"
And once again the answer softly fell
"Yes, this one thing, all things above—
God's will to love." *Primitive Methodist Magazine.*

II Arrogance

Prince Frederick William and Rehoboam. We have followed with much interest in recent years Emperor William's treatment of the Crown Prince who will one day reign in his stead. Not only has he had the education and training essential for a ruler, but he has been taken into his father's counsels, and has had difficult affairs of state submitted to his judgment, not for settlement, but as practical tests in his education in statecraft.

How differently was Rehoboam's youth spent! His father seems to have neglected him, he was brought up in a luxurious harem, under the influence of an idol-worshipping mother and obsequious slaves, where every whim was doubtless gratified. No wonder that when first he found himself dressed with a little brief authority his arrogance knew no bounds. Were ever more blustering, insolent words addressed to a people by a young ruler on his accession than these of Rehoboam: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions!"

Queen Wilhelmina's Training and its Result. These are the words spoken by Wilhelmina on the day that she was crowned: "The hour has now arrived when, amid my faithful States-General, and invoking the holy names of God, I dedicate myself to the people of the Netherlands, and solemnly promise to maintain their dearest rights and freedom. On this day I draw more closely the solemn tie existing between myself and my people. High is my vocation, and hard the task, to govern a nation small in numbers but great in virtues, and strong by nature and character. Orange can never—yea, never—do enough for the Netherlands."

And Wilhelmina meant every word she said. Not only is she wise and good at heart, but she had been wisely trained by her mother for the position she was to fill. When she was a little girl she went to her mother's room one day and rapped on the door. "Who is it?" asked her mother. "It is the Queen of the Netherlands," the little one replied boldly: "May she come in?" There was no answer, and she rapped again. "Who is it?" "It is Wilhelmina of Holland. May she come in?" Still there was no answer, and then a timid voice asked, "May I not come in?" "Who is it?" once more Queen Emma asked. "It is mother's little girl." "Mother's little girl may come in," Queen Emma promptly returned. The door flew open, and the little girl ran into her mother's outstretched arms.

Be on Guard.

Something wise within you, boys,
Bids you watchful be,
When Sir Pride would lock your heart,
And throw away the key. *Frank Walcott Hutt.*

III Greatness is in Service

Whosoever would become Great shall be Your Minister. You recall a lesson we had last year when Jesus was nearing Jerusalem for the last time. The sons of Zebedee wished to be great in His kingdom and they asked that they might sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left. The other ten disciples were angry when they heard about it, and Jesus said to them: Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

This is the central truth of our lesson to-day, that greatness lies in service; the Old Testament is not the New, the words of the prophets have not for us the same beauty and authority that the words of Jesus have, but we shall find this year that the Old Testament has much the same lessons to teach, lessons which we have not yet learned.

If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. Whether or not the old men were sincere in this counsel, whether they were advising Rehoboam to really serve the people, or only to make fair promises, the truth of their words is the same. If you will serve them, they will serve you; if you wish to be a great king you can become one by looking out for your people's best interests. But Rehoboam, like the rulers of the Gentiles, wished only to lord it over them.

Summit Greatness. There was a day when men thought brawn was divinity. God was a muscular giant. Hercules was worshipped. "Might makes right" was the supreme international law. Power was regarded as a virtue. It was the age of the divine right of strenuosity.

Undoubtedly there was a great truth at the center of the world's worship of brawn. There is no virtue in weakness and no glory in suicide. Might is greatness, but it is not summit greatness.

Then, in the evolution of humanity there came a day when man thought brain was divinity. God became an intellectual giant. The world deified its poets and philosophers. The arts flourished. It was the age of the divine right of culture. Undoubtedly there was a great truth at the center of the world's worship of brain. There is no virtue in stupidity, and no glory in ignorance. Knowledge is power and thought is greatness, but it is not summit greatness.

Then in the further evolution of humanity, Jesus of Nazareth appeared. He called Himself "the Son of Man" and said: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

From that day men have thought that service is divinity. God is the Man of Galilee. The world has recognized the divinity of the ministering Christ. Power and culture reach their real glory only as they stoop to serve. The age of the divine right of unselfish devotion to the good of others is upon us; and the law for nations and individuals is the golden rule. *James I. Vance,* in *The Rise of the Soul.*

Who is the Greatest? Long ago the five Fingers were quarreling among themselves as to which was the greatest, and they agreed at last to let the Tongue decide after each had given the reason for his claim.

Said the Thumb: Nature has placed me first, and nature makes no mistakes. The other fingers can not even pick up a pin without me, and I have to do all the work on one side against all four on the other.

The Index Finger reasoned: "I am the greatest for if any one wants to point out anything, or warn anybody, or lay down the law, I am always used."

"Only look at me," said the next Finger; "I am the center round which the other smaller ones are grouped, the largest of all and the chief of all."

"I wear the ring," proudly said the Fourth Finger, "That shows who is the chief."

"Greatness does not depend on size," the Little Finger said earnestly, "I am the one that gives beauty to the hand, that guards the others from many knocks."

This was the verdict of the Tongue: "One is not greater than the other. Let each one keep his place, do his work, and be kind to his neighbor."

SENTENCE SERMONS

See page 19.

With the well-advised is wisdom. Prov. 13.10.

Conceit will puff a man out, but never puff him up. *Ruskin.*

Beneath political convulsions, the plan of God moves on. *F. B. Meyer.*

Go into the fight bragging and you will come out of it beaten. *Alexander Maclaren.*

The world will soon forget its masters, but will cling with loving remembrance to its servants. *L. T. Sweeney.*

If a ruler has received the two heavenly gifts of knowledge and purity of heart, the earthly gift of statecraft will come of itself. *Jean Paul Richter.*

A soft answer turneth away wrath;
But a grievous word stirreth up anger. Prov. 15.1.

Pride goeth before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 16.18.

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. Luke 11.17.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

See page 19.

"How will it look when the months have flown
This fair new page that is all our own?"

This is the question that we all are asking ourselves on this New Year's Day. It can be rightly answered if, unlike Rehoboam, we seek the highest counsel. Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, the Psalmist assures us: let us seek and follow that guidance.

From the unhappy desire of becoming great, gracious Lord, deliver us, is a petition in the Moravian Litany. With the happy desire of becoming great through service, gracious Lord, imbue us, let us add to that petition.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The Appeal. 1-5.
II. Opposite Counsels, 6-11.
III. The Answer, 12-15.
IV. The Result, 16-24.

On the death of Solomon, Jeroboam returned from Egypt, whither he had been obliged to flee because of his revolt. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, succeeded to the throne at Jerusalem, and went to Shechem to meet representatives of the nation, who agreed to serve him on condition that he would lighten the heavy burdens that had been imposed by his father. He promised to give his answer at the end of three days.

Rehoboam consulted the counselors who had grown old in his father's service; they assured him that the people would serve him for ever if he would serve them and speak good words to them. This advice did not suit the new king, and he turned to the young men who had been his early companions. Tell them, they counseled, that you are as much mightier than your father as a thigh is larger than a little finger; tell them that instead of lightening their yoke you will add to it, so that your father's chastisement will seem like a stroke of a little whip, and yours like the blow of a heavy scourge. This counsel suited the arrogant king, and in this insolent, threatening way he gave his answer to the people. "What have we to do with David's successor!" the indignant northern tribes exclaimed: "To your homes, O people of Israel; now see to you your own house, O son of David." Rehoboam sent Adoram, the taskmaster, to them, but the angry people were in no mood for such an officer, and they quickly stoned him to death. The king fled to his chariot and made his escape to Jerusalem.

Thus from that day onward. Solomon's kingdom was divided into two rival powers, for the northern tribes chose Jeroboam as their king while the tribe of Judah remained loyal to Rehoboam. Rehoboam made preparation to regain his rebellious subjects by force of arms, but gave up his project at the command of Shemaiah, the prophet. "It was a thing brought about of Jehovah," the writer of Kings declares. It was the beginning of disasters that culminated in the overthrow of both kingdoms. In a little over two centuries the

northern tribes were carried off into captivity by the Assyrians and one hundred and thirty-six years later the kingdom of Judah came to an end at the hand of the Babylonians.

Had the tribes remained united they might have become a great Jewish Empire, powerful enough to absorb the other kingdoms along the Mediterranean. Why, then, was this far-reaching crisis brought about by God? They were God's chosen people, their peculiar mission was not to attain political success, but to receive and transmit high spiritual blessings. Political success meant oriental despotism and idolatry. Political failure meant the rule of the prophets rather than of the kings. "Out of the depths of their private and national woe, those divinely enlightened men caught glimpses of the character of the Eternal and of His purposes which enabled them to rise above national ambition and exile, and to give to their nation and the world hopes and truths and principles which are the eternal foundations of religious faith. Thus, while by the disruption the Hebrew nation lost its life, in a truer and higher sense it found it."

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The causes that led to the disruption.
2. Imperialism. Public officers are public servants.
3. The temporizing policy of the old men and modern political promises.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

See page 19.

Questions to look up. 1. After the disruption of the kingdom at Shechem, how was war prevented? (1 K. 12.21-24.) 2. What promise had been made to Jeroboam and what was the condition? (1 K. 11.35-38.) 3. In what did Jesus say true greatness consists? (Mt. 20.25-28.) 4. What three changes in worship did Jeroboam make? 5. Who was the first one to make a golden calf for the Israelites? (Ex. 32.7-35.) 6. What feast is referred to in verse 32? (Look up the reference (r) given in your Bible.) 7. What befell Rehoboam after he lost the northern tribes? (Give one of your pupils clipping from p. 56 of this Guide.) 8. Look up the references to Bethel in the Subject Index of your Bible. What does its name mean, and how was it given? 9. How many books are there in the Bible before 1 Kings? 10. Why do we have two Books of Kings? Who wrote the Books? (Give each of your pupils a copy of the information on page 20 of the Introduction.)

Questions to think about. 1. Was Jeroboam's fear well founded? 2. Did he break the first commandment? The second? 3. Did he merit the judgment passed upon him in the later records, that "he made Israel to sin"?

Note-book Work. 1. In your book of "The Kings of Israel" write your first story entitled, "The Kingdom Divided" (see p. 20.) 2. Make an outline map of Palestine and locate the places mentioned in the first two lessons.

Map of Ancient Eastern Countries

LESSON II—JANUARY 8

JEROBOAM MAKES IDOLS FOR ISRAEL TO WORSHIP

Golden Text

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Ex. 20.4.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 12.25-13.6. Jeroboam Makes Idols for Israel to Worship. **T.** Ex. 32.1-35. The Worship of the Golden Calf. **W.** Ps. 106.1-46. The Stubborn Idolatry of Israel. **T.** 1 Kings 13.1-10. The Prophecy against Jeroboam's Altar. **F.** 2 Kings 23.15-20. The Prophecy Fulfilled. **S.** Hos. 4.1-19. Ephraim is Joined to his Idols. **S.** Rom. 6.1-23. The Wages of Sin is Death. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 12.25-13.6. PRINT 1 Kings 12.25-33. COMMIT vv. 28-30

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. 31 And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Levi. 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made; and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

25. *Jeroboam built Shechem and Penuel.* The cities had long been in existence: Jeroboam rebuilt, fortified, adorned them.—*He went out from thence.* This may mean that he transferred his seat of government from Shechem to Penuel, or that he made Penuel a military center.

27. *The house of Jehovah at Jerusalem.* The temple was evidently now regarded as the chief place for worship, and the people came there from all over the land to celebrate the great religious feasts.—*Their lord.* Rehoboam, the descendant of their great kings, Solomon and David.

28. *The king made two calves of gold.* "He would not be at the charge of building a golden temple as Solomon had done: two golden calves are the most that he can afford" (*Mathew Henry*).—*Unto them.* The northern tribes. —*It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.* Or, *Ye have gone up long enough,* RVm. Note his hypocrisy.—*Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.* Compare the words in Ex. 32.4, when Aaron presented the golden calf to the children of Israel in the wilderness. There is no indication that Jeroboam knew how Aaron was denounced and punished for

his deed, as recorded in Ex. 32. The word *gods* is plural because there were two images. For Jeroboam's guilt see the Second Topic, p. 59.

29. *In Bethel and in Dan.* At the two ends of his kingdom.

30. *This thing became a sin.* This sin of Jeroboam, which caused Israel to sin, is referred to twenty-three times in the books of the Kings.—*Before the one.* Or, *each of them,* RVm.

31. *He made houses of high places.* He erected temples or places of worship upon the high places. There were many "high places," or hill-tops, in the land, where the Canaanites and the people of Israel had worshipped, and where the Israelites continued to worship till the reign of Hezekiah, although the law as given in Dt. 12.10-14 required all to worship in one sanctuary: Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest, but in the place which Jehovah shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings.—*Made priests from among all the people.* "From all the people indiscriminately;" according to the law of Dt., only the Levites could be priests.—*That were not of the sons of Levi.* The Levites in Jeroboam's territory had withdrawn to Jerusalem, 2 Ch. 11.13, 14; 13.9.

32. *Like unto the feast that is in Judah.* The Feast of Tabernacles, which was held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, Lev. 23.34. Jeroboam probably placed his feast a month later because the harvest was later in his northern territory.

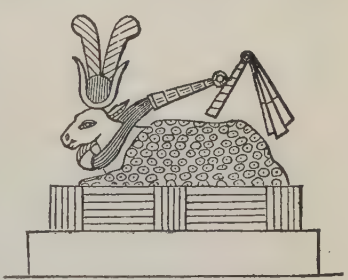
33. *He went up unto the altar.* Or, *Offered upon,* RVm. He took upon himself the duties of the priest.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

26. *Jeroboam said in his heart.*

> The heart aye's the part aye
> That mak's us right or wrang. *Burns.*

28. *He made two calves of gold.* They were regarded as figures of Jehovah under the well-understood and universally adopted emblem of a young bull, the symbol of fertility and strength. Some have fancied that he was influenced by his Egyptian reminiscences. This is an obvious error. In Egypt, *living* bulls were worshipped, not idol-figures. Egyptian gods would have been strange reminders of Him who delivered His people from Egyptian tyranny. He was only encouraging his people to worship Jehovah under the form of the cherubim. Whatever may have been the aspect of the cherubim in the Oracle of the temple, cherubic emblems appeared profusely amid its ornamentation, and the most conspicuous object in its court was the molten sea, supported on the back of twelve bulls. It is true the later prophets and poets, like Hosea and the Psalmist, spoke in scorn of his images as mere "calves," and spoke of him as likening his Maker to "an ox that eateth hay," Tobit 1.5. They even came in due time to regard them as figures of Baal and Astarte, but this view is falsified by the entire annals of the Northern Kingdom. Jeroboam was, and always regarded himself as, a worshipper of Jehovah. *F. W. Farrar, Expositor's Bible.*



Ancient Egyptian Calf-Idol

29. *He set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.* It was precisely the policy of Abder-Rahman, Caliph of Spain, when he arrested the movement of his subjects to Mecca, by the erection of a Holy Place of the Zeca at Cordova, and of Abdel-Malik when he built the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem, because of his quarrel with the authorities at Mecca. *Dean Stanley, Jewish Church.*

31, 33. *He made priests that were not of the sons of Levi.. and he went up unto the altar to burn incense.* If David, unrebuked, made his sons priests; if Ira the Ithrite was a priest; if Solomon, by his own fiat, altered the succession of the priest-hood; if Solomon (no less than Jeroboam) arrogated to

himself priestly functions on public occasions, the opinion as to priestly rights may not have existed in the days of Jeroboam, or may only have existed in an infinitely weaker form than in the days of the post-exilic chronicler. *F. W. Farrar,* in *Expositor's Bible.*

32. *Jeroboam ordered a feast.* The loss to Jeroboam was not only religious. The sanctuaries of the time were its principal markets as well, and the trade, which a monarch so vigilant of the commercial interests of his realm must have included among his designs in building the temple, would be largely diverted from its courts. At Bethel, which, besides possessing more ancient religious associations than Jerusalem, stood near the junction of two trade routes, Jeroboam instituted at harvest time a great festival which would also be a great fair. This was only twelve miles from Jerusalem, and in times of peace would attract, by its double temptation, numbers of traders from Judah. *George Adam Smith, Jerusalem.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

27. *Then will the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord.* It is interesting in this connection to recall the fact that Assurbanipal, king of Assyria 668-626 B. C. (the great and noble Asnappar of Ezra 4.10) founded the royal library which has preserved for us so valuable a collection of the best Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions, not from love of literature but in order to prevent the young Assyrians from going down to Babylon to be educated, "where treasonable ideas would be instilled into their minds by the priests of Babylon, who were always in patriotic opposition to Assyria."

28. *Behold thy gods.* The Druses of Mt. Lebanon, Anti-Lebanon and the Hauran possess a brazen image of a similar character. It is the figure of a calf, upon which they insist that they look with indifference, and claim that they preserve it simply as a caricature of their first teacher, El Dorazi, who lived eight hundred years ago, after whom they are called Druses and whom they hold in derision as inferior to Hamzi, another of their teachers. It is well known, however, that there are no greater liars in the world than the Druses, and that their books enjoin secrecy respecting their tenets. The motive by which they claim to be actuated in making and keeping these images is quite insufficient. It is highly probable that the golden calf, having been long worshipped in Upper Palestine, brazen copies of it have from time to time been found among the ruins of the country, and these have gradually come to be regarded with superstitious reverence. *Van Lennep, Bible Lands.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There was a mixture of good and evil in Rehoboam. After the division of his kingdom he listened to the advice of the prophets, and prospered for a time, building and fortifying many cities. According to one record, "there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually," and in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign the Egyptian king, Shishak, invaded Jerusalem, despoiled the temple, taking away the shields of gold so that they had to be replaced with shields of brass, and shattered Rehoboam's power. The cause is pointed out by the prophet Shemaiah: Thus saith Jehovah, ye have forsaken me, therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. Our illustration shows the colossal figure of Shishak with many captive kings. One has a Jewish countenance and is believed to represent Rehoboam in his humiliation. See the illustration in the last lesson. In long rows is given a list of the conquered Palistinian cities. Rehoboam reigned seventeen years, and was succeeded by his son Abijah.

Our lesson takes up the fortunes of the Northern Kingdom soon after the separation, and tells about Jeroboam's policy of government.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

For location of *Shechem,* see last lesson. Jeroboam made Shechem his capital, but he soon removed to *Tirzah,* a few miles northeast of Shechem, 1 K. 14.17; 15.21, 33. *Penuel* was east of the Jordan on the northern bank of the

river Jabbok, probably on a caravan road leading through Gilead to Damascus, and therefore Jeroboam fortified it against attack. It is mentioned in Gen. 32.31 and Judges 8.8.

Bethel was near the southern border of Jeroboam's kingdom, ten miles north of Jerusalem. Here Abraham and Jacob had worshipped, Gen. 12.8; 13.3; 28.11-19; 35.9-15, and it had been the home of the prophet Samuel, 1 Sam. 7.16. Its name, which means "House of God," was given it by Jacob.

Dan was in the extreme northern end of Jeroboam's kingdom, near one of the sources of the Jordan. It had been a "holy city" in the time of the Judges: a graven image there was worshipped under the offices of a Levitical priest, a grandson of Moses (Judges 18. 26-31).

(Be sure to have your pupils locate these cities on an outline map or a sketch map of their own, as called for in the "Work Assigned" last Sunday.)

Shishak with Prisoners of War. A Sculpture on the Temple Wall at Karnak (Thebes), Recording his victories in Judah in the Days of Jeroboam

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Limit your lesson to Jeroboam's chief sin, omitting the other charges against him in regard to the priests, the feast and his offering of burnt incense, which your pupils will not understand without too much explanation. Teach the second commandment and its meaning, and show why Jeroboam broke it. Sketch on your blackboard the two kingdoms; ask for the name of each and write *Israel* and *Judah*. Ask for the capitals of each and locate them; then for the cities where the images were set up and locate them. Let one of your pupils write beside each place located its initial letter. Then make very clear what was the result of Jeroboams' sin. Expand the thoughts contained in the two sentence sermons by G. W. Johnston and C. T. Wilson. As an example of good influence tell the story given in the first "Suggestions for Beginning the Lesson," and use as much of the third Topic as is adapted to your pupils.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. "Before we can make you well, we must put you to sleep," said a kind surgeon to a little girl to whom he was about to give ether before beginning a dangerous operation upon her. "Then," said she, "if you are going to put me to sleep I must say my prayers first,' and she knelt and repeated, "Now I lay me down to sleep." "If I should die before I wake"—these words touched the surgeon deeply, for he knew it was quite possible she would never awaken from that sleep. But she did live, and that night the surgeon prayed for the first time in twenty years. The little girl had no thought of leading the great surgeon to worship God, it never occurred to her that her prayer would have any influence upon him, she thought only of doing what seemed to her right.

The king of Israel, about whom we hear to-day, was not thinking about his lasting influence upon his people, he did not intend to cause them to forsake the worship of God, but that is what he did. The heart of the little girl was

perfect with the Lord her God, as was said of David in olden times, and therefore her influence was good, but as for Jeroboam, this king of Israel, we shall see that "God was not in all his thoughts," and therefore his influence was evil. How had Jeroboam gained his throne?

For Older Pupils. (Question and instruct your pupils about the Books of Kings, the way in which they were written, etc.; this information is given on pp. 20-22. Then briefly review last Sunday's lesson.)

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I. Do Right, Regardless of Results

Jeroboam's Policy. Jeroboam was on the throne of the Northern Kingdom, but he did not feel secure. His first recorded effort was to widen the breach between the two kingdoms. He must keep his people from going to Jerusalem to worship, he thought, else they would be drawn back to loyalty to the house of David. His reasoning was probably correct, and the policy he adopted, that of establishing a system of worship of his own, was a great success. He strengthened his own position, but he did so at the cost of degrading religion.

When Henry Clay was about to introduce into Congress a certain measure, he consulted one of his friends. "If you do that, it will kill your chances for the presidency" was his friend's comment. "But is the measure right?" returned Clay. "Yes, it is right." "Then I would rather be right than president." Jeroboam preferred to be wrong and be king.

"Perish policy and cunning,
Perish all that fears the light.
Whether losing, whether winning,
Trust in God and do the right."

The end does not justify the Means. "See," one says, "here is a glorious opportunity to make your fortune in one day. Never mind, though it does involve the ruin of a rival; you don't owe him any consideration. He would have no regard for you, if your circumstances were reversed," and so the temptation is to go and do as it is suggested. Or you may have the chance to step into a long coveted office at once, provided only you will covenant to do some mean, ungenerous, or dishonorable thing toward him who at the moment holds it; he has no love for you, indeed, and would not hesitate to crush you if you were in his power; but what does that matter? If you yield to such a temptation, you are planting a seed which in after years will meet you in the shape of manifold retributions, while at the same time you are taking from success that which is ever its truest charm, namely, that it has been honorably and deservedly won. Never take a short road to any object when the gate into the road is sin.

Let no vision of immediate success beguile you to do wrong. Do as God would have you do, and leave it to Him to bring you to the goal you seek, in His own time. Make haste slowly, and rather resign yourself to the loss of your kingdom, than go to it through sin and shame. *W. G. Taylor,* in *David, King of Israel.*

Consequences do not justify Wrong Doing. After William H. Seward had served the State of New York as governor he returned to his law practice. In Auburn, his home town, a wretched, insane negro was imprisoned for murder. Public sentiment was all against him, and no one would defend him. Seward saw that the man was mentally and therefore morally unresponsible. He knew that whoever defended him would bring upon himself the scorn of the people, and yet he offered to act as his counsel. The consequences were as he expected. "I rise from these fruitless labors exhausted in mind and body, covered with public reproach, stunned with protests," he wrote one day during the trial. The trial was a mockery of justice, and the man was condemned to death. Mr. Seward carried the case to a higher court, but before that trial was ended the negro died, and an examination of his brain proved that it was diseased, as Mr. Seward had proved beforehand.

Fear as to consequences should never keep one from doing what is right. We are responsible for our part only, we are not responsible for consequences. Desire for one's own advantage should never lead one to do wrong. There is

ever danger that one may convince himself that a wrong course is right just because he wants it to be right: possibly Jeroboam convinced himself that the establishing of the golden calves for worship was right because he wanted it to be right. Another man in Mr. Seward's place might have convinced himself that that negro should be undefended because he did not want the trouble and the reproach of defending him.

II The Nature of Idolatry

Jeroboam's Sin. The papers recently contained an account of a very singular "case." A young woman who has never had typhoid fever, and seems herself to be in perfect health, has been taken to a New York hospital for observation as a "human culture-tube," or "typhoid-germ factory." The typhoid germs in her system which cause her no disturbance are giving that dread disease to others. So Jeroboam, though himself at this time free from the sin of idolatry, was nevertheless inoculating others with germs that were destined to increase in virulence till fifty years later a temple to the heathen god Baal arose in his kingdom and his people became corrupted by that dread sin.

There are many sins of which Jeroboam's record in this lesson shows that he was guilty: selfishness, hypocrisy, yielding principles to policy, unfaithfulness to duty, lack of religious perception—but he was not consciously an idolater; he would have repelled the thought of worshipping Baal with horror. He did not intend to present a false god for his people to worship—he did not break the first commandment: like Aaron he intended to represent the true God by symbols—he broke the second commandment. He gave the people a conception of God that made it easy for them to degrade Him to a level with the god of the Semitic peoples akin to them, and their downward course from true worship to the worst forms of idolatry naturally followed.

Jeroboam's Images and the Images in Catholic Churches. This is the Decree of the Council of Trent: The Holy Synod declares, That the images of Christ, of the virgin mother of God, and of other saints, are to be had and retained especially in churches, and that *due honor* and *veneration* are to be shown them; not that it is believed that any divinity, or virtue, is inherent in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped, or that anything is to be asked of them, or that trust is to be placed in images, as of old was done by the Gentiles, who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which they represent; so that through the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover our heads, and fall down, we may *adore* Christ and *venerate* the saints whose likeness the images bear.

The italics are Father Francis H. Tavisk's, to whom I am indebted for this translation, and his further comment that "the Catholic religion teaches that we *worship God* alone; we *venerate the saints and their images.*" This distinction is without doubt made by Catholic priests and educated Catholics, but any one who has ever visited a Catholic church in Mexico must be certain that to those ignorant peons the images are their idols. Jeroboam's symbols easily become Israel's Baal.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren's Deduction. The true nature of idolatry is brought out in the incident. The true object of worship was worshipped in a false way. No matter though the image represented Him, its worship was idol worship. It necessarily degraded the conception of Jehovah. It brought sense into dangerous prominence as an aid to worship. The symbol might at first, and to the more devout, be a mere symbol, and transparent; but it would soon become opaque, and from symbol turn to embodiment, and thence pass to being the very deity represented. It is a feat of abstraction impossible for the ordinary man, to worship before an idol and not to worship the idol.

The strange, awful fascination which idolatry exercised is perhaps gone now from the civilized world. But the lesson remains ever in season, that it is dangerous work to bring in sense as an ally of devotion, because outward things, which at first may be only symbols and helps, are almost certain to become something more.

III Sin and its Influence

Jeroboam, who made Israel to Sin. Had Jeroboam been "a man after God's

own heart," what a glorious start he, their first king, might have given the Northern Kingdom! He was chosen by the people to rule over them and right the wrongs they had suffered under Solomon. His was a great opportunity. Solomon had set the pace toward the worship of false gods: in his old age he built places of worship for his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods, and his wives turned away his heart after other gods. Jeroboam not only might have lessened the burdens imposed by Solomon, but also have righted this, the king's other great wrong. He had a splendid chance, and he failed ignobly. He might have been spoken of in the annals of his kingdom as Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to walk in the ways of the Lord: instead, whenever his name is mentioned the comment is added, "who made Israel to sin."

Jeroboam was not thinking of the influence of his sin, he could not look down the years and see how soon the altars of Jehovah would become altars of Baal worship, he could not see the downward course of the ten tribes till they were blotted out of existence as a nation because "Jeroboam drove Israel from following Jehovah, and made them sin a great sin, and the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them, until Jehovah removed Israel from out of their own land to Assyria unto this day," 2 K. 17.21-23. But Jeroboam was responsible for his influence, nevertheless.

Dr. J. R. Miller says: "There is a story of an abbott who coveted a piece of ground. The owner consented to lease it to the abbott for one crop only. The abbott sowed acorns, a crop which took three hundred years to ripen. Jeroboam's one sowing mortgaged the new kingdom for evil through all its history. Satan begs for one crop only, and then sows seeds whose harvest will fill all the life to the end. We do not know what we are doing when we start a wrong thing."

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, is a solemn statement, but Ruskin's addition makes it yet more solemn. "Yes," he says, "and shall others reap, after the seed of pestilence has rotted away in the earth from whence it came."

Each One is bound to leave the Track in Good Condition for Others behind him. "There had been a freight train ahead of us with a broken car-wheel," a long-belated traveler explained, as reported in the *Youth's Companion*. "It was a heavily loaded car, and whenever that break in the wheel came over on the rail it came with a thump. If it hit on a tie, the chances were that it was all right; but if it hit between the ties, it was likely to break the rail. And as a matter of fact, it did break twenty rails. Yet it pulled its own load through and delivered its freight unharmed to the next station, which happened to be as far as it was going. There they discovered the damage, and sent the section-gang to flag us and replace the rails.

The car that did the damage did not go into the ditch, as it deserved to do, and logically ought to have done; but it left the occasion for twenty wrecked trains and many lost lives behind it.

There are lives like that, old fellow, lives that run merrily on and land at the terminal, apparently all right. But the lesson of the thing to me was that every man is bound, in fairness, not only to deliver his own cargo, but to leave the track in good condition for others behind him."

SENTENCE SERMONS

It is better to prefer honorable defeat to a mean victory. *Ruskin.*

And because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequences. *Tennyson.*

The biography of failure is, "I got started wrong." *Hezekiah Butterworth.*

Keen-sighted men are often short-sighted. *F. W. Ryder.*

Do well and right, and let the world sink. *George Herbert.*

Expediency is man's wisdom; doing right is God's. *George Meredith.*

Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image. Ex. 20.4.

True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth. Jn. 4.23.

Sin is like a weed which outgrows the field where it first found root, and ruins other fields not on the same property. *G. Wesley Johnston.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Jeroboam threw away a great opportunity. Every one's life is an opportunity. What are you doing with yours?

A true follower of Christ chooses the upright course whatever the consequences.

The effect of a deviation from uprightness is not seen all at once. "However acute the angle of departure, the line has only to be prolonged and the distance between it and that from which it diverged will be the distance between heaven and hell."

"Look to your radiations," advises a modern philosopher. "Ask yourself honestly how you are affecting the people with whom you habitually come in contact." Ask yourself this question on your way home, and if you are not satisfied with your honest answer, honestly resolve with divine help to change your radiations.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. Shechem and Penuel, 28.
II. Jeroboam's fear, 26-27.
III. The golden calves, 28-30.
IV. Other institutions, 31-33.

Jeroboam's first work after being made king over the ten northern tribes was to strengthen his kingdom by fortifying Shechem and Penuel, and his next was to strengthen his kingship by establishing places of worship within his own territory. He feared that if the people continued to worship at the temple in Jerusalem they would return to their allegiance to Jerusalem's king, Rehoboam. Therefore he had two golden calves made and set up at the two extremes of his land, Bethel on the south and Dan on the north, and said to his people: "It is too far for you to go to Jerusalem to worship: worship God in these calves of God." Moreover, he built sanctuaries on many hilltops, selected priests, not from the tribe of Levi, but from other tribes, changed the date of the feast of Tabernacles from the seventh to the eighth month, and himself offered sacrifices upon the altar.

Though Jeroboam was warned by an unknown prophet of Judah (1 K. 13) and later also by the prophet Ahijah (1 K. 14), he "returned not from his evil way." And his name in the annals of the kings of Israel is ever afterwards coupled with the words "who made Israel to sin."

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The union of politics and religion in Turkey and Persia.
2. Making religion an instrument for securing personal advancement. "Jeroboam has had many followers among politicians. The long history of the relations of Church and State in the Old World has been little else than the State's hiring and muzzling the Church for its own advantage."
3. The failure of success.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What relation do the Books of Chronicles bear to those of Kings? How do the viewpoints of the writers differ? (If possible, give each pupil a copy of the information on page 23 of this "Guide." 2. Read the history of Judah from Rehoboam to Asa: 1 K. 15.1-8; 2 Ch. 13. 3. Read the account of Asa's early years, 1 K. 15.9-15; 2 Ch. 14.1-8. 4. Read the account of Asa's warfare with Zerah, 2 Ch. 14.9-15. 5. Who was king of Israel when Asa ascended the throne? (1 K. 15.9.) 6. How long did Asa reign? (1 K. 15.10.) 7. Look up the reference given in your Bible with verse 7. 8. In what direction from Judah was Ephraim? Manasseh? Simeon? 9. Read the rest of Asa's story. (1 K.15.16-24; 2 Ch. 16.)

Questions to think about. 1. What is the meaning of "There was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in?" 2. What does the word "covenant" mean? 3. What do you think about the justice of the decree given in v. 13?

Note-Book Work. In your book of "The Kings of Judah" write an account of "Jeroboam the First King."

LESSON III—JANUARY 15

ASA'S GOOD REIGN IN JUDAH

Golden Text

But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack: for your work shall be rewarded. 2 Ch. 15.7.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 15.1-15. Asa's Good Reign in Judah. **T.** 2 Chron. 14.1-8; 1 Kings 15.9-15. Asa's Zeal for the Lord. **W.** 2 Chron. 16.1-6. Asa's Appeal for Foreign Aid. **T.** 2 Chron. 14.9-15. Asa's Victory over Zerah, the Ethiopian. **F.** 2 Chron. 15.1-19. The Prophecy of Oded. **S.** 2 Chron. 16.7-14. Asa's Reproof by Hanani, the Seer. **S.** Ps. 16.1-11. The Reward of Serving the Lord.—*S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 15.1-15 COMMIT vv. 1-2

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: 2 and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. 3 Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: 4 But when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. 6 And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. 7 But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abomination out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill-country of Ephraim; and he renewed the altar of Jehovah, that was before the porch of Jehovah. 9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and them that sojourned with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him. 10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 11 And they sacrificed unto Jehovah in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. 12 And they entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul; 13 and that whosoever would not seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14 And they sware unto Jehovah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and Jehovah gave them rest round about.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *The Spirit of God.* "In the Old Testament the personality of the Spirit of God had not yet clearly emerged, although it is certainly implicit; the Spirit is, then, rather a Power subject to God's free will and closely connected with His word," (*New Century Bible.*)—*Azariah.* Nothing further is known about this prophet.

2. *Went out to met Asa.* As he was returning from his victory over the

Ethopians. Read 1 K. 14.—*If ye seek him,* etc. Compare David's counsel to Solomon, 1 Ch. 28.9.

3-6. Perhaps these words should be bracketed as the observation of the Chronicler and an interruption of Azariah's words which are resumed in v. 7, but they may well have been part of the prophet's speech, for it was common for prophets to recall the nation's past history and this history enforces Azariah's main exhortation, that Jehovah will be with you while you are with Him.

3. *For a long time.* In the early history of the Hebrews. Compare the times of the Judges, Jd. 17.6.—*A teaching priest.* See Lev. 10.8-11 and 2 Ch. 17.7-9.

4. Compare Dt. 4-29.

5. *There was no peace to him.* Travelling was unsafe, for the highways were unoccupied, Jd. 5.6.

6. *Nation against nation.* The various tribes of Israel itself were at war with one another in the time of the Judges.

7. Compare Samuel's farewell to the people, especially Josh. 1.7-9.

8. *And the prophecy.* Or, *even the prophecy,* RVm.—*Oded.* Either the words "Azariah the son of," v. 1, have been omitted by a copyist (they are found in the Vulgate,) or the words "of Oded the prophet" have been inserted.—*Abominations.* Idols.—*The cities which he had taken.* Ch. 13.19.—*He renewed the altar.* "The altar of burnt offerings, which might well need repair after having stood for sixty years, even if it did not need cleansing from idolatrous defilement," (*New Century Bible*).—*Before the porch.* Ch. 8.12.

9. *Them that sojourned with them.* We are told one of the ten tribes went over to Judah: 10.17; 11.16.—*Out of Simeon.* The territory of Simeon lay south of Judah, and had practically belonged to the Southern Kingdom from the time of the division.

10. *In the third month.* The month *Sivan,* corresponding to our month of June, the time when the Feast of Weeks, (harvest) was held, Dt. 16.9-10.

11. *Of the spoil which they had brought.* From their victory over Zerah the Ethiopian, 14.9-15.

12. *Entered into a covenant.* "Renewed the covenant vows of loyalty to Jehovah."

13. *Should be put to death.* This was the law. Ex. 22.20; Dt. 13.6-11.

15. *He was found of them.* As promised in v. 2.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS.

2. *Jehovah is with you while ye are with Him.* It is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence on the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord. *Abraham Lincoln.*

6. *God did vex them with all adversity.*

From Thine anger
But yet more from Thy ceasing
To be angry
Deliver us.

George MacDonald, Seventeenth Century.

18. *He brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated.* These *holy things* must have been brought from other sanctuaries. Was this done for their greater security? Or may we see in the fact the first step towards that gradual centralization of the worship which the Deuteronomic reform was to consummate? *George Adam Smith, in Jerusalem.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

14. *Trumpets and cornets.* In length, the trumpet was little less than a cubit. It was composed of a narrow tube, somewhat thicker than a flute, but with

as much breadth as was sufficient for admission of the breath of a man's mouth; it ended in the form of a bell, like common trumpets. *Josephus, Antiquities.*

Authorities differ as to the shape of the cornet, some supposing it to have been straight, while others contend that it was more or less bent like a horn. From its name, which means "bright" or "clear" the *shophar* is thought to have had a clear, shrill sound. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Our first lesson was about the division of the kingdom, and our second about Jeroboam the first king of Israel. To-day we follow the fortunes of the Kingdom of Judah. See the Historical Background of the last lesson. After a seventeen years' reign Rehoboam died and was succeeded by his son Abijah (or Abijam, as he is called in Kings). Abijah's victory over Jeroboam, King of Israel, with half the latter's force, is noted in our next lesson. His address from Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim, in which he prophesied victory for his own forces because "God was at their head," is told in 2 Ch. 13, yet he "walked in all the sins of his father." At the end of three years he died and was succeeded by his son Asa. Jeroboam was still on the throne of Israel when Asa ascended the throne of Judah, and during Asa's long reign of forty-one years there were five other kings in Israel.—Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri.

The first ten years of Asa's reign were years of peace, and there was an immediate reform: heathen places of worship were destroyed, towns were fortified, he built and prospered. Then the Ethiopians under Zerah invaded the land, but Asa conquered in a great battle at Mareshah and pursued his enemy even unto Gerar, taking back a great amount of spoil which was used

Assyrian Representation of Carrying Away Spoil from a Captured City

in the sacrifices at a religious convocation. Rehoboam had been spoiled by prosperity: would Asa be likewise? He was kept from danger by the warning of the prophet Azariah. Asa's reform and the renewal of the covenant, which form the basis of our lesson, occurred in the fifteenth year of his reign.

Later, trouble came to Judah from Israel. Baasha, who came to the throne of Israel in 913 B. C. was an ambitious sovereign. He entered into an alliance with Ben-hadad of Damascus. He fortified Ramah, about six miles north of Jerusalem, and thus commanded the passageway leading to Jerusalem, Asa's capital. Asa felt unequal to the task of dislodging his enemy unaided; he stripped the temple and his palace of their treasures and sent them to Damascus to purchase the aid of Ben-hadad. Ben-hadad sent his armies to attack the cities of Israel, and Baasha was forced to leave Ramah. Asa then destroyed the fortifications of Ramah and used the stone and timber to fortify Geba and Mizpah.

While Asa thus accomplished his immediate desire, he mortgaged his kingdom, as it were, to Syria, for Ben-hadad seems to have regarded Judah as a

subject kingdom. In his son's reign, Judah and Israel united against the Syrians as their common foe. This was the beginning of that long series of wars which weakened both kingdoms and made them as easier prey for the later Assyrian conquests. The prophet Hanani told Asa that he had acted foolishly in relying on the King of Syria rather than upon God, and his words so angered the king that he imprisoned the prophet. In his old age Asa suffered from a disease of the feet, and died in 876 B. C. Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him.

Location of the Six Southern Tribes

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The battle where Asa defeated Zerah and his Ethiopians was by Mareshah in the Shephelah, the Low Hills that separate the tableland of Judah from the low-lying coastland. He pursued them as far as Gerar, a town a few miles south of Gaza, near the coast. Somewhere on his return journey he was met by Azariah.

For the location of Judah, Benjamin, Ethiopia, Manasseh, Simeon, see the map.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

It is easy to make these lessons very monotonous, dwelling upon an evil king in Israel (Jeroboam) one Sunday, upon a good one in Judah the next (Asa), evil Omri and Ahab in Israel the third, good Jehoshaphat the fourth. But it is easy, too, to treat them very differently, and make each one full of interest for your pupils.

There are three scenes in this lesson for you. First, the valley scene where the people of Judah are arrayed in battle against their foe, the Ethiopians, and Asa their king offering his beautiful prayer of trust in the Lord, 2 Ch. 14.9-15; second, King Asa met by the prophet Azariah, and the latter's urgent words to be strong and courageous; and third, the great meeting at Jerusalem where all the people joyfully pledged themselves to worship God. These scenes can be made very vivid, and Dr. Hall's application, p. 66, can be used.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Fifteen years ago a missionary in China was met on his morning walk by a young Chinese student who stopped him to say how useless it was for him to stay and work among the Chinese, for he was despised by them all. "If you stay here a hundred years you will not then have won as many friends as you have fingers," he said with contempt. This year that same Chinese student came to the missionary and asked to be taught about Jesus. "All the city says that you are guilty of doing good," was the reason he gave for coming.

We heard last Sunday about a king who was guilty of doing evil. Who was he? Of what was he guilty? Over what kingdom did he rule? To-day we hear of a king who came to his throne in the last year of Jeroboam's reign, a king who was guilty of doing good. What was his name? What was his kingdom? How was he guilty of doing good?

For Older Pupils. Question your pupils about the Books of Chronicles, their purpose and characteristics. Compare the two accounts of Asa's reforms, 1 K. 15.9-24 and 2 Ch. 15 and 16. What does Chronicles tell that Kings omits? Show the different viewpoints of the two narrators, p. 23 of the Introduction. Chronicles tells how the prophet's influence led the king to make his reforms. Kings mentions Asa's destruction of idols and his wars with Israel, but Chronicles points out that the long peace was the reward of Asa's seeking the Lord and his continuous wars were the penalty of his later unfaithfulness to the Lord. This thought of the connection between obedience

to God and national prosperity, and disobedience and national disaster, runs through the books of Chronicles.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Obedience Pledged

Two Ancient Covenants. You recall how Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem and after his farewell address, in which he rehearsed God's goodness to their forefathers and them, bade them fear Jehovah and serve Him in sincerity and in truth. Choose you this day whom you will serve, he declared, but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah. And the people renewed their covenant, saying: Far be it from us that we should forsake Jehovah, to serve other gods; for Jehovah our God He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went; therefore we also will serve Jehovah; for He is our God.

Similar was the covenant entered into by the tribe of Judah at Jerusalem at the word of Asa their king. They entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with their whole desire.

A Modern Covenant. It came to me so strongly, that I had to go out in the woods and have it out with the Lord. Could I trust Him always? Would I not again hunger and thirst? Would I not again be my old self? But was not Christ able to keep me? So there, among the pine trees, I took the step once and forever, and forever He has saved me. The emotion has passed away, but the consciousness of having found a new secret remains. Nothing henceforth shall divide my heart with Him. *From a letter to Rev. F. B. Meyer.*

Our Covenant. Very simple and very beautiful was the first church covenant made in New England: "We covenant with the Lord, and one with another, and we do bind ourselves together in all His ways according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us in His blessed Word of God." Let us make the same covenant, entering into it as did the kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem, with all our heart and with all our soul.

Choose whom you will serve. One summer afternoon a young man sat under the pines on a sloping hillside thinking deeply. Two hours passed and suddenly he raised his eyes to the distant mountains, and said, "I will." That "I will" sent him to an island in the southern Pacific to spend his life with a degraded, barbarous race, whose eyes he slowly opened until they saw their Creator and worshipped Him.

Across the river sat another young man on a bench in a green and beautiful park. He seemed to be thinking earnestly. Suddenly he said aloud, "After all, I will," and sauntered off to join companions who had invited him to a game in the corner club-room. That "I will" cost him in the end home and friends, and sent him to a prison cell—a thief.

Miss Margaret Slattery draws this comparison and then adds (in Talks with the Training Class): "What a tremendous power it is which makes possible decision and resolution! One trembles in the presence of such a power as he realizes the consequences which may follow the 'I will' which, of all creation, only man can say."

I will seek Jehovah with my whole desire, cried Asa and all Judah, and that decision made and kept meant peace and prosperity. Not only is that power of decision and resolution everyone's, but is a power that no one can leave unexercised. The choice must be made, for he that is not with Me is against Me, said our King.

The Covenant that Every Child should make. It may be that some of you have found out that friends may tire of us, they may grow away from us, they may change without meaning to change. But there is a greater Friend who is "Faithful and True." In the Bible we are told that this is one of His many names. Faithful and True. How beautiful a name, and how worthy He to bear it!

What answer is in your heart to give to Him who is faithful and true?

Is it your wish to enter into such a way of living, to be strong in bearing whatever charge He may lay upon you, that He shall see that you are copying Him and growing like Him, and He shall think of you as His true child? Some of you have given yourself to Him, have put yourself in His hands. Who could make you willing to take yourself back, to be never, never again—here or hereafter—a true child? Why should not each and every one of you not come to Him? Where does the trouble lie? Not on His side, I am sure. Will you not think this over, praying while you think? Why should you not let Christ whisper to your soul: My *true* child? Condensed from *The Silver Cup,* by *Charles Cuthbert Hall.*

II Old Testament Mercy

Whosoever would not seek Jehovah should be put to Death. Would it be right for you to own a slave? Was it right for George Washington to own slaves? How can you excuse George Washington while you could not excuse yourself for doing the same thing?

God's revelation of His laws has been gradual. Each one is responsible for living up to the light that he has received. In the time of George Washington every one thought that it was right to hold black men as slaves, and he did not sin against the light he had. He was not unwilling to see; his vision was defective.

Is it ever right to be unmerciful? If a school teacher has an aged father and mother to support and no other way of earning a living save by teaching school, is it right for a school board to drop her because she is a poor teacher? Is it right for a board to be merciful to her and let her keep her place, and unmerciful to a roomful of pupils whose usefulness for life might be weakened because of their failure to be well taught?

If we have thought about these problems and settled them aright, we can better understand Asa's unmercifulness. When his people entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, it was settled that "whosoever would not seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman." Those who persisted in worshipping idols were the ones who were put to death. In this, Asa was not unwilling to see what was right, but his vision was defective. Old Testament mercy was not New Testament mercy. Christ had not revealed the love and mercy of the Father, and Asa was acting here in accordance with the mercy of the time in which he lived and the light that had been revealed. Then, too, such violent measures were needed in order to restrain many from again following heathen practices. An Achan must be stoned to death for taking the goodly Babylonish garment, in order to keep the people of Joshua's time from robbing God: an Uzzah must stumble and die, in order to teach the people of David's time reverence; an idolater must be put to death, in order to teach the people of Asa's time the worship of the true God.

The Difference that the Coming of Christ has made. In the preface to the commentaries of Julius Cæsar Anthony Trollope writes: That which will strike the English reader most is the cruelty of the Romans, cruelty of which Cæsar himself is guilty to a frightful extent, and of which he never expresses horror. When we come to the slaughter of whole tribes, to the devastation of the country purposely that men and women might starve; to the abandonment of the old, the young, the tender, that they might perish on the hillsides; to the mutilation of men; to the burning of cities told us in a passing word; to the destroying of many thousands as we should mention the destruction of a brood of rats * * * then it is that we remember that the coming of Christ had changed all things, and, though terrible things have been done since Christ came to us, that men are not now as men were in the days of Cæsar.

III Missionary Topic Lands without the True God

A Sentence Belonging in the History of Every Christian Nation. Now, for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found of them.

These words might well be written in the history of every Christian nation to-day, its own name being substituted for that of Israel. While naturally all men are religious, there has been a time in every nation's history when its people have been only groping after God if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, for though He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live, they have reared their altars to Unknown Gods and have been content to worship the supreme King under images of wood and stone.

For a long time our own ancestors were without the true God. Said a high-caste Brahmin at a meeting in Philadelphia: "My friends, if I had ever had any doubt as to the value of Christian missions that doubt would be removed as I stand here and look into your bright and intelligent faces, and consider the facts in the case. When my ancestors were among the lordliest persons on earth, your ancestors were among the most degraded of human beings, despised by those of my race. Yet by Christian missionaries your fathers were sought out and won to Christ, and in consequence you now sit here, clothed and in your right mind, as a living proof of the value of Christian missions."

The Hebrews were early led to a knowledge of the true God through their prophets who were filled with the Spirit of God. But God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son. Jesus Christ the Son has revealed to us the Father, and our conceptions of the true God, faulty as they are, are far truer to His nature than were the conceptions of the Hebrews in Asa's time.

Lands near Home without the True God. It is not only in foreign mission fields that the knowledge of God must be taught. In our great country earnest missionaries are needed in the waste places to make them fruitful fields. The American Sunday-School Union sends out to the neglected parts of our land Gospel teachers and Sunday-school organizers. One of them writes from Northeastern Michigan: I have seen neighborhoods where the people were continually "at outs" with one another, changed into quiet orderly communities; drunkards and gamblers made into good citizens; the irreligious and ungodly praising God out of a Christian experience; and hundreds of children and young people whose religious education has been entirely neglected, brought under the influence of faithful teachers of the Word; all this, and more, the outcome of these little Union Sabbath-schools dotting the hills and plains of the five counties over which I travel.

The Relative Proportion of People with and without the True God. There are five hundred million nominal Christians in the world, men and women and children who have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a tremendous army, but—there are twice as many who have not heard the good news. If the apostles who started out in the first century to tell about Christ and Him crucified could have looked ahead and seen that nineteen centuries later two-thirds of the people of the world would still be living in darkness, don't you think they would have lost heart? What a blessing it will be when the churches can stop talking about Christian missions because all the world has been "missioned," to use a word a small girl coined!

SENTENCE SERMONS

Even in a palace, life may be lived well. *Marcus Aurelius.*
The Lord is always on the side of the right. *Lincoln.*
Make no delay in this matter of life, the choice of God. *Horace Bushnell.*
Extreme remedies are very appropriate for extreme diseases. *Hippocrates.*
He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him. Heb. 11.6.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Neither his father nor his grandfather had done anything to check idolatry, and Asa had been brought up in an idol-worshipping court. He was superior to these evil influences, and when he came to the throne his first thought was the abolishing of idols and establishing of true worship. One may be a fol-

lower of God even in an unrighteous home. One may conquer circumstances.

It was when Asa was flushed with victory that Azariah reminded him that he must still be strong to combat idolatry within his kingdom, that it was not a time to be slack. We may not rest upon laurels gained, but must push forward to greater moral victories.

Asa did not ask himself the question, "Will it make me much trouble if I attempt to abolish idolatry?" but set at once about the work of reform.

God is with us throughout our life journey just as truly as He was with the children of Israel.

Have we made a covenant with God, pledging Him permanent obedience and loyal service?

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

Asa the third king of Judah, was returning from a great victory over Zerah the Ethiopian when he was met by Azariah the prophet, who exhorted him to lay firm foundations for his kingdom's prosperity by renewing their allegiance to the Lord. "The Lord is with you while you are with Him," Azariah told him, and then recalled the time when Israel had been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law, and how there had been no freedom for the ordinary business of life but civil strife and adversity had been their portion. The prophet ended with an urgent plea for courage on Asa's part; "Be *ye* strong, and let not *your* hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded."

Asa courageously carried out the much needed work of reform. He put away the idols, including the dreadful image which Maacah, the queen mother, had made, grinding it to dust and burying it in the valley of the Kidron, and deposing her from her position as queen. He renewed the altar of burnt offerings in the temple, and brought back to the sacred sanctuary its silver and gold and vessels. He gathered together at Jerusalem all Judah and Benjamin and those that flocked into his kingdom from Israel when they saw his reforms and his prosperity. It was the third month of the fifteenth year of his reign that he offered the spoils of his victory in a great sacrifice to the Lord. At the same time the people entered heartily into covenant to worship God, decreeing that all who worshipped idols should be put to death, and with joyful sound of trumpets and cornets and shouts they rejoiced in their pledge.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Books of Kings and Chronicles. See Introduction, pp. 20-23.

2. Azariah's exhortation in verses 2 and 7, the words needed by modern reformers. 3. Godliness as a national asset.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. How did Omri gain his throne? (1 K. 16.8-22.) 2. What good things about Omri can you find in the Bible record? (Popular, 1 K. 16.16; able general, 16.17,18,22; astute statesman, 16.24; powerful, 16.27. Give one pupil the account on p. 70 of the next lesson.) 3. What evil? (1 K. 16.25-26.) 4. Whose example did both Omri and Ahab follow? 5. Where in the Bible is the commandment found which they broke? (Ex. 20.3-4.) 6. What is said about Omri in Micah 6.16 and 1 K. 20.34? 7. Look up these references and tell what you have learned about the worship of Baal: (1 K. 18.22; 2 K. 10.22; Jer. 7.9; 19.5.) 8. What was the Asherah, v. 33? (Give one pupil the explanation on p. 71.) 9. Describe Samaria. (Give one pupil the account on p. 74.) 10. What is said about it in Isa. 28.1? (11. What had Solomon to do with Hiram King of Tyre? (1 K. 5.1-12.) 11. When and how were the Books of Kings and Chronicles written? (Clipping, p. 21.)

Questions to think about. 1. Why was an alliance desired with Phœnicia? 2. Why was Samaria a good location for the capital?

Note-Book Work. 1. In your book of the Kings of Judah write an account of the reign of Asa. 2. Make a sketch map and locate all the places mentioned in the first four lessons.

LESSON IV—JANUARY 22

OMRI AND AHAB LEAD ISRAEL INTO GREATER SIN

Golden Text

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. Prov. 14.34.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 16.8-20. Zimri Defeated by Omri. **T.** 1 Kings 16.21-28. The House of Omri Established. **W.** 1 Kings 16.29-33. Ahab's Corrupting Example. **T.** Micah 6.1-16. The Statutes of Omri are Kept. **F.** 2 Chron. 21.5-20. The Infection of Judah. **S.** 2 Chron. 22.1-12. Judah's Ruler Sprung from the House of Omri. **S.** 2 Kings 9.1-10. Prophesying the Destruction of the House of *Ahab*. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 16.15-33 PRINT 1 Kings 16.23-33 COMMIT vv. 25-30

23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, *and reigned* twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. 24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria. 25 And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. 27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel and Samaria twenty and two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

23. In the thirty and first year of Asa began Omri to reign, and reigned twelve years. In v. 29, it says that Ahab began to reign in the thirty-eighth year of Asa's reign. It is assumed that the first four years of Omri's reign, from Asa's twenty-seventh to his thirty-first year, were the years when his claim was disputed by Tibni. See the Historical Background.

24. *Two talents of silver.* About $4,000. *Built on the hill.* Or, *fortified the hill,* RVm.—*Called the name of the city, after the name of Shemer, Samaria.* Matthew Henry suggests, arguing evidently from modern instances, that perhaps Shemer, who sold him the grounds, let him have it considerably cheaper upon condition that the city should be called after his name! *Samaria* is the Greek form of the name: the Hebrew form, given in the RVm, is

Shomeron which shows its derivation from *Shemer.* This city afterwards gave its name to the central part of Canaan and to the people dwelling there.

25. *Omri dealt wickedly above all that were before him.* Micah (6.16) recalls his statutes for idolatrous practices.

26. *Their vanities.* Idols.

27. *The rest of the acts of Omri.* See the Historical Background.—*The book of the chronicles of the Kings of Israel.* Evidently this refers to public archives. See p. 20 of the Introduction.

28. *Slept with his fathers.* The usual Old Testament expression for *died.*

29. *Ahab.* About this king we are told more than about any other king of Israel.

30. *Above all that were before him.* See v. 25 and 14.9.

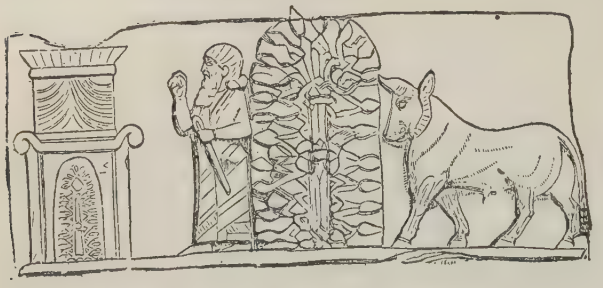
31. *He took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of the King of the Sidonians.* See the law forbidding such a marriage in Dt. 7.1-4. Dean Stanley suggests that the forty-fifth Psalm, with its references to the "daughter of Tyre" and the "ivory palaces" was composed as a song in honor of the marriage, which was at first greeted by the people with rejoicing. The terrible results brought about by this marriage are seen in our later lessons.—*Ethbaal.* "According to Menander, Ethbaal was the great-grandfather of Dido, the founder of Carthage."—*Baal.* The word is a title meaning "lord," "ruler;" its plural is *Baalim,* for the word was given to various Canaanitish conception of a god. It was *the Baal,* the most distinguished god, the Phœnician Baal, whose worship Ahab introduced into Samaria.

32. *He reared up an altar for Baal.* "International courtesy demanded that the foreign queen should have a sanctuary of her own religion in her adopted country" (*Skinner.*) *The house of Baal which he had built in Samaria.* In the outer court of the building stood several wooden pillars dedicated to the god, and an altar on which the fire was always burning, where sacrifices, even children, were offered, (Jer. 19.5). There were many priests and prophets of Baal (according to 1 K. 18.22, 450 prophets) who in a peculiar official dress (2 K. 10.22), barefooted, served the god with incense (Jer. 7.9) and sacrifices.

Ancient Medals Representing Astarte, Ashtoreth and Female Baal

33. *The Asherah.* The Hebrew word is wrongly translated *grove* in the A. V. Many scholars consider it a sacred pole, which was a survival of the early tree-worship. "By Old Testament writers the word is used in three distinct applications. 1. *The goddess Asherah.* In several places Asherah must be recognized as the name of a Canaanitish deity, as in 1 K. 18.19 we read of the prophets of Baal and of Asherah. A cuneiform tablet found at Taanach, Palestine, shows that a goddess Ashirat or Asherah was worshipped from a remote antiquity by the Western Semites. The relation of this early Canaanite goddess to the powerful Semitic deity named Ishtar by the Babylonians and Ashtart (Old Testament Ashtoreth) by the Phœnicians, is still obscure. The latter in any case gradually displaced the former in Canaan. 2. *An image of Asherah.* The graven image set up by Manasseh in the temple (2 K. 21.7) when destroyed by Josiah is simply termed the *Asherah* (2 K. 23.6). Like the idols described by the prophet of the Exile (Is. 41.7; 44.12), it evidently con-

sisted of a core of wood overlaid with precious metal, since it could be at once burned and "stamped to powder," and was periodically decorated with woven hangings by the women votaries of Asherah (2 K. 23.7). There was therefor good warrant for seeing in the Asherah which Ahab set up something of greater consequences than a mere post or pole. It must have been a celebrated image of the goddess. 3. *A symbol of Asherah.* In the remaining passages of the Old Testament the Asherah is the name of a prominent, if not indispensable object associated with the altar and the *mazzebah* (pillar) in the worship of the Cannaanite high places. It was made of wood and could be planted in the ground, plucked up or cut down, and burned with fire. Accordingly the *Asherah* is now held to have been a wooden post or pole having symbolical significance in the Canaanite cults," (Condensed from Hastings Dictionary).—*And Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah.* His treatment of Naboth is our lesson five weeks hence. We shall see in later lessons that he was an able ruler, but all his services to his kingdom weigh little in the historian's scales as against his encouragement of idolatry.



Sacred Symbolic Tree of the Assyrians

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS.

26. *He walked in all the way of Jeroboam.* One Jeroboam will set the style for a hundred thousand senseless, servile imitators; and Jeroboam himself copied some Aaron or other sinner a little further back. Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; and they all fall into the same monotonous gait before they have gone far. *Wm. R. Richards,* in *For Whom Christ Died.*

31. *Ahab took to wife the daughter of the king of the Sidonians.* Sidon and Tyre were the great cities of Phœnicia, and Phœnicia managed the sea-trade of all the world. There was much to favor the project of an alliance with this great commercial power. Memories and tales of the days of Solomon still haunted Hebrew imagination, and while the bitterness of those days had passed away, the color and the romance of them lingered. Besides, Phœnicia had practically no agriculture, and Israel, if in firm alliance with Phœnicia, might have risen to enormous importance as the market for her food-supply.

But the decisive element in the case against commercialism was religion. The spiritual ideal was strong enough to overthrow the material ideal. The sacred laws of Israel put a check upon her commercial enterprise. Besides the law which regulated spoil, there were laws concerning interest and money, intermarriage with foreigners, and many other matters directly affecting trade. The religious sects of Rechabites and Nazarites were a standing protest against all foreign traffic. The spirit of the prophet poured contempt upon the gay foreign imports, and definitely opposed the foreign trade as a thing which would associate the people with idol-worship, which would lead to the forsaking of the hard struggle with the soil for the easier riches of the market, and which, by creating the taste for luxury, would soften and debauch the race.

Ahab was a weak man, who would now be Oriental monarch, now people's friend, now soldier, and now merchant king. Against him rose the conscience of Israel in the person of Elijah, with what result all the world knows. And the lesson of it all is this, that the story and the land interpreting each other proclaim Israel a peculiar people, set in a peculiar place for a peculiar purpose. For them, as Renan says, "to act like men"—*i. e.* like all the rest of

the world—was a sort of degradation. All other experiments in greatness failed; their greatness lay solely in the knowledge of the Lord. Condensed from a chapter in *The Holy Land,* by *J. Kelman.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

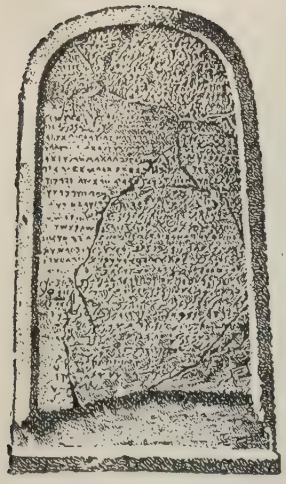
31. *King of the Sidonians.* In 1855, in the cemetery of ancient Sidon, the sarcophagus of a Sidonian king named Esmunazar was found, bearing this inscription: "I am cut off in my prime. Few have been my days. I am lying in this coffin, in this tomb, the place which I have built. Oh, then, remember this! May no man open my funeral couch. May they not seek for treasures, for no treasure is hidden here; may they not move my coffin, nor molest me in this my funeral bed."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Two Sundays ago we heard how *Jeroboam,* the first king of Israel, "sinned and made Israel to sin." He had a troubled reign of twenty-two years. In 2 Ch. 13.2-20, we hear of his warfare with Abijah, son of Rehoboam, of the Kingdom of Judah, in which he was defeated with great losses. "The Lord smote him and he died," and was followed by his son *Nadab,* who walked in his father's evil ways. Nadab ruled only two years, and was slain in a conspiracy raised by a man of humble origin, of the house of Issachar, *Baasha,* his own commander-in-chief. Baasha "waded to the throne through blood," for his first act was to establish his rule by putting to death all the descendants of Jeroboam. The chief event of Baasha's reign was his attempt to gain control of the Southern Kingdom in the reign of Asa (noted in our last lesson), which was frustrated by the interference of the Syrian king, Ben-hadad. The prophet Jehu denounced Baasha and told him that because he walked in the way of Jeroboam, all his house should be destroyed. Twenty-four years Baasha reigned and died in peace, and was buried in state. His son *Elah* reigned only two brief years, and then the captain of half his chariot force, *Zimri,* conspired against him and murdered him as he sat in Tirzah, now the capital, "drinking himself drunk." Zimri immediately slew the remainder of the royal house of Baasha, but he met in return a terrible death after only a week's reign. The army at this time was besieging the Philistine town of Gibbethon, and when the news came of Elah's murder, they made *Omri,* their general, king, and marched to Tirzah and besieged it. When Zimri saw the city taken, he set fire to the castle of the palace and perished in the flames. Omri thus gained the throne from Zimri, but he had a second rival to conquer, for half of the people preferred *Tibni.* The contest between them lasted perhaps four years, and ended with the victory of Omri, "so Tibni died and Omri resigned."

We have reviewed fifty years in this history from Jeroboam to Omri, and in this brief time have been three dynasties and five kings on the throne of Israel; Jeroboam and his son Nadab; Baasha and his son Elah; and Zimri.

With Omri begins the fourth dynasty. The writer of Kings gives but a passing notice of Omri, mentioning the length of his reign, his choice of Samaria for a capital, and his idolatry, though he does allude to "his might that he showed." Yet Omri was one of Israel's greatest kings; Professor Kent terms him "in certain respects the David of Northern Israel," and draws a parallel between David's choice of Jerusalem and Omri's choice of Samaria. Omri was so powerful a ruler that to the Assyrians even down to Jehu's time the kings of Israel were known as "the house of Omri." We learn from the Moabite stone, which was discovered in 1868 in the land of ancient Moab, that "Omri was king of Israel and he afflicted Moab many days because Chemosh (the god of Moab) was angry with his land." Omri took possession of the land of Medeba and he occupied it during half his son's days, forty years. To the Arameans (Syrians) whose center was Damascus and who were the great land traders of the Eastern world, Omri was obliged to cede certain territory and certain rights in Samaria for their merchants (1 K. 20.34), but perhaps he was not loth to do this, as it was his policy to



The Moabite Stone which mentions Omri, King of Israel. Erected by the King of Moab, about 850 B. C.

seek commercial greatness for Israel. He it must have been who arranged Ahab's marriage with Jezebel, seeking this alliance with Phœnicia for political and commercial reasons. (We know that the marriage must have taken place early in Omri's reign, because their grandson Ahaziah was born about the eleventh year of Ahab's reign, 2 K. 8.25-26.) Omri reigned from 887 to 875 B. C.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The first capital of the Northern Kingdom was at Shechem; the second, at Tirzah. Probably the burning of the palace at Tirzah by Zimri and the ease with which the besiegers captured the city in the civil broils led Omri to seek a new and stronger site for his capital. He found it in Samaria, a hill with flat summit surrounded by other hills, which, as Conder says, before the invention of gunpowder must have been almost impregnable. Dr. George Adam Smith suggests that it was probably because of his alliance with Phœnicia that Omri selected the isolated hill at the head of the chief pass to the coast, and adds: "To the earlier prophets of Judah Samaria was the double of their own Jerusalem, both in character and the consequent doom which their God sent upon His people. Young and upstart as she was, Samaria derived from the greater fertility and openness of her surroundings a precocity of growth which lifted her above Jerusalem in wealth and energy." Samaria remained the capital and withstood many sieges, until it was conquered after a three years' siege by Shalmaneser of Assyria, and the kingdom came to an end. Centuries later it was rebuilt by Herod the Great with much magnificence and called Sebaste, the Greek name of the Emperor Augustus. Broken columns dating from his reign are still to be seen in the present wretched hamlet.

Tyre and Sidon, the two great Phœnician cities, were on the coast twenty-eight miles apart. Ethbaal is called "king of the Sidonians," but he was king also of Tyre. Tyre was the principal center of that sun-worship which cast its baleful shadow over the whole ancient world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

With your pupils you will not, of course, attempt to teach the kings of Israel and Judah by name or order, nor to teach the events that occur between lessons. You will give them a clear picture of each king in the lessons, showing them how he did evil or did good in God's sight. To-day teach the first commandment and recall the first part of the second. Show an idol (which can be obtained from your mission board) or a picture of one, describe how it is made, and picture Ahab and his people worshipping a Baal instead of God. Tell the story of the Moss-covered Idol, p. 76. If you then have time, take up the third Topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger and Older Pupils. Some time ago Professor Robert W. Rogers wrote "A Story in Stone" for the *Classmate*. His story is about the two kings of our lesson. Who were they? Of what kingdom were they king? "One summer day in the year 1868," says Professor Rogers, "a German missionary, the Rev. F. A. Klein, rode into the little circle of mud houses which now bears the name of Dhiban, over in the land of Moab. The natives called his attention to a block of stone, black basalt, about three feet ten inches high, two feet broad, and fourteen and a half inches thick. It was rounded at the

top, was beautifully polished, and on one face there were cut deeply into the stone rows of curious little letters, which he recognized as being like the letters in which the ancient Phœnicians wrote. He agreed upon a price with its owners, paid them something in advance, and departed. By the time he had reached Jerusalem the whole land was filled with rumors that a great discovery had been made, and before it was made known that Klein had purchased the stone several parties had started for Dhiban to try to secure it. Among these was the eminent French archæologist, M. Clermont-Ganneau, who saw the stone, recognized its interest and value, and, not knowing that it had been sold, offered a large sum for it. The Arab owners of it willingly sold it over again. Before it could be removed Clermont-Ganneau took a squeeze impression of the inscription upon it, and then went away.

Soon the natives received other offers, until they began to believe that the stone must be some marvelous talisman, which all these Europeans were anxious to secure. If this were so, reasoned they, it would be a good idea to break the stone into pieces and sell each separate piece as a talisman. They therefore propped up the ends of the stone and built a great fire beneath the middle. When the stone had been heated almost to a glow, they dashed cold water upon it, and so caused it to fly into pieces. These pieces were then divided among prominent members of the tribe.

Meanwhile Clermont-Ganneau had read the copy which he had made, had found it even more valuable than he had first supposed, and now came back to secure the original. He was too late. By purchase he secured some pieces and carried them away with him to send them to Paris. After a time some more pieces were bought by others and sent to the Palestine Exploration Fund in London. Later Clermont-Ganneau secured a few bits more and sent them off to Paris, where they were partially fitted together. One day, at a meeting of the Palestine Exploration Fund in London, Dean Stanley arose and stated these facts, and then moved that the few pieces in their possession be given over to the French government, to be joined with the already large pieces which were in Paris. This was done with great cordiality. So were the pieces finally joined together, and the few that were still missing were supplied in plaster by means of the squeeze which Clermont-Ganneau had made in the beginning. The monument now stands in the Museum of the Louvre, cracked indeed, but still legible.

Now let us ask what this inscribed stone with the strange history may be. It is a Moabite inscription, written in the Moabite language by Moabites in the ninth century B. C. Here is the way the inscription begins: "I am Mesha, son of Chemosmelek, king of Moab, the Daibonite. My father reigned over Moab for thirty years, and I reigned after my father. And I made this high place for Chemosh in Keracho, a high place of salvation, because he had saved me from all the kings (?) and had caused me to see my pleasure on all them that hated me. Omri was king over Israel, and he afflicted Moab for many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he also said, I will afflict Moab ..."

From this extract it will be seen that Omri, king of Israel, is mentioned by name, and that reference is also made to his son, Ahab. The writer of the inscription is Mesha, and he is mentioned in the Bible in these words: "Now Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master, and he rendered unto the king of Israel the wool of an hundred thousand lambs and of an hundred thousand rams" (*2 Kings* 3.4). We have, therefore, in the Old Testament a reference to this king, and then we have his own inscription mentioning the kings of Israel. It would be difficult, indeed, to find a more interesting parallel to the Bible than this old story in stone."

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Sin of Idolatry

A Subtle Sin. Jeroboam desired his people to worship God, not in the temple at Jerusalem, but in their own kingdom, and he set up the two golden images as symbols of the true God around which they might congregate. Fifty years later all images were alike to the people and they were worshipping Baal,

the god of the Phœnicians, with all degrading and cruel rites. The sin of idolatry, of whatever kind, is insidious in its growth; before the worshipper realizes it, what seemed at first a lawful object of desire has become a fatal object of worship.

We are apt to think that only heathen are idolaters. What is idolatry? Inordinate devotion to any person or thing. What is a god? Any thing that holds the supreme place in one's heart. What is the name of your god? Wealth, position, pleasure, popularity, perhaps. The love of scholarship for its own sake, Bishop Fitzgerald declares, is little better than the love of money for its own sake; some of our idolatries have soft names. There is constant danger that worthy objects of desire may gain so strong a hold of one's heart that He whose name is above every name may have no place therein. My little children, guard yourselves from idols, was the parting exhortation of the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is a warning which every one living now needs, and there are multitudes who need this special warning. Be not your own idol.

Some Idols of Christian Lands. In George Eliot's life we read: "Dessoir, the actor, was another pleasant variety in our circle of acquaintance. I was very much pleased by the simplicity with which he one day said, 'Shakespeare is my god; I have no other god;' and indeed we saw that his art was a religion to him." Literature and art are noble things, actually adored by a select circle. "Italy is itself a religion," said Mazzini. Patriotism in the life of the ancient Roman occupied the place of a religion; and many, like the modern Italian, find in patriotism the highest thing they know. It is reported that when the attendant drew up the window-blind, and the morning sun shone on the dying artist, Turner, taking his last look of the rising orb, exclaimed, "That is my god." Such is the confession of, perhaps, an increasing number; they know no divinity beyond nature's loveliness and wisdom. John Stuart Mill held "his wife's memory as a religion"; and the sublimest thing that many hope for, and that which becomes the last object of their faith and reverence, is human affection. Patriotism, Science, Art, and Literature, Justice, Beauty, Goodness, Love, and Truth are the exalted ideals to which we may aspire, but altogether in the pagan spirit, ignoring God and the great hope which springs out of faith in Him. Worthy as such ideals are regarded in themselves, they do not yield satisfaction, strength, or the infinite joy of a pure and hopeful heart. The sense of God alone gives validity and efficacy to noble ideals. To seek high and lovely things away from God is the saddest of idolatries. *W. L. Watkinson* in *The Education of the Heart.*

The Moss Covered Idol of China.

I journeyed one day in the far distant region
  Of China, that gray-headed land of the East,
Where the name of the gods and the idols is legion,
  And each second day through the year is a feast;
I came to a place where the shade was most pleasant,
  Where a brook rippled over its pebbled incline,
And a burden-bent, simple-souled, toil-broken peasant
Bowed down to an idol that sat in a shrine,
  A moss-covered idol that sat in a shrine.

And thus it had lodged there for decades unnumbered,
  Unheeding the suppliant pleading for aid,
As if from its birth it unceasingly slumbered
  While the blind devotee all his vows freely paid;
Not a sign had it given, not a word had it spoken,
  In praise of good deeds, or in curses condign;
Not a word nor a nod, not a tear nor a token
  From this moss-covered idol that sat in a shrine.

And yet through the years, all untaught and unknowing,
  The peasant prayed on to the unheeding ear,
And faint grew the hope in his heart dimly glowing
  That the idol would give to him comfort and cheer.

But the days of his pilgrimage soon will be ended,
His steps will grow feeble, his strength will decline,
While the ache in his heart will be left unattended
By the moss-covered idol that sits in the shrine.

O brothers, far over the ocean waves praying,
Will you open your heart to this suppliant's call?
Will you help him to-day, with no thoughtless delaying
To find in your Saviour a Saviour for all?
Send the Word, the glad Word that from death shall reprieve him;
Let the Light of the World in his heart brightly shine;
Will you tell him of Christ and the Gospel—or leave him
To the moss-covered idol that sits in the shrine?

Joseph Taylor, in Baptist Missionary Magazine.

II His Son Reigned in His Stead

The Law of Life. Jeroboam slept with his fathers and Nadab his son reigned in his stead; Baasha slept with his fathers, and Elah his son reigned in his stead; Omri slept with his fathers and Ahab his son reigned in his stead: thus the chronicles ran in those far-distant days and thus they run to-day. Fathers and mothers die leaving their work in life for their sons and daughters to carry on.

As the days of David drew nigh that he should die, he said to his son and royal heir who must represent his family and kingly glory: I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man.—"I die. Consider my story. Shun my follies, Be encouraged by my successes, have my courage and faith. And do a better—because a completer—work than mine." So David slept with his fathers, and his son reigned in his stead.

A Son's Debt to his Father. He was a good man, my father was, an' his usual form of address to me was "my son," just so, unadorned, an' I don't know but it's helped me all my life. It sort o' challenges a boy to be called "my son" by a good man. *Ruth McEnery Stuart.*

A Son's Responsibility for his Father. An eight-year-old boy had never cared to attend church, and had never gone unless his parents required it, but suddenly he began to go regularly. Then it was noticed that he never missed the service, even in the worst weather, and some one asked him why it was. "Don't you know?" the lad asked, "Why, I have to go now. Papa has gone to heaven, and I have to sit in his seat in church."

Fortunately not many lads have to learn so early that they must take their father's place. But they know that if they live they will some day have to take up the work of some one who was left it. Some day, perhaps, the son will have to be his mother's protector; some day, perhaps, the daughter will have to take her mother's place in the home.

The responsibility of parents for their children is often spoken of, the responsibility of children for their parents needs emphasis no less. You know the saying that "It is only three generations from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves." The son of a poor man by strenuous toil and sacrifice amasses a fortune which his sons, brought up in luxury, do not know how to keep nor how to use. This morning's paper contains an account of the death of the last son of a millionaire in an asylum for inebriates. He had left millions to his four sons, they had squandered it all, and all four had died a drunkard's death. The father's good name is perpetuated or dishonored, his good work is continued or dropped by the son. Sons and daughters should regard all that their parents have done for them and all they have done for the world as a sacred trust for which they are responsible.

What "Freckles" Knew. "Freckles" was his nickname. He had no mother. He had a drunkard for a father. But he had a Sunday-school ,and there he learned about temperance and decent living and the fight against evil. Freckles served milk at people's back doors, but he had the steady spirit of a crusader, young as he was. When the town had a local-option election—it was in Illinois, and Mrs. Stevens tells the story—Freckles put on a white badge, marked in gold letters with the slogan "The Saloon Must Go," and did his best to help, for, as he frequently said, "It's an awful hard town to live in the way it is!"

Plenty of men wore the badges, too; but the liquor forces were too strong, and it was discouraging from the first. When election day came, the town went "wet"—overwhelmingly so—and the men took off their badges and said, "It's no use; we might have known it wasn't any use to have a local-option election in this town!" But Freckles—well, Freckles went around serving milk the next morning, still with his badge on, "The Saloon Must Go." "Why, you haven't taken of your badge yet," said one customer.

"What should I do that for?" was Freckles' reply. "It was the men that voted yesterday; but it won't be long before we Sunday-school boys will be doing the voting—and then the saloons are going to go!"

It was an answer that caused every temperance worker in the town to take courage. It is the answer to many problems—the answer of the boy, who is the future embodied. The Sunday-school boy and his ideals are the hope of America. Honor to Freckles!—and may there be more of him in every community, making the future bright in its outlook. *Forward.*

III The One Thing that Matters

The Lesson from the Record of the Two Kings. Here are twelve years' reign in the one case, and twenty-two in the other, all boiled down, so to speak, into half a dozen sentences, and estimated according to one standard only. What has become of all the eager strife, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, that burned so fiercely for a while? All died down into a handful of grey ashes. And what lies in them like a lump of solid metal that has been melted out of the huge heap of days and deeds that fed the fire? The man's relation to God. That abides; that is recorded; that determines everything else about him. Waving forests that once had sunshine pouring down on their green fronds are represented in a thin seam of coal. Our lives will all come down to this at last. How did he stand towards God and His will is the final question that will be asked about each of us, and the answer to it is the only thing that concerns the dead—or the living either. Men write voluminous biographies of each other. How little their judgments matter to the dead men! Praise or blame are equally indifferent to them. But what matters is, whether God will have to record of us what is recorded of these two wretched kings, or whether He will recognize that the main drift of our poor lives was to serve Him and do His will. He was a great scholar; he made a huge fortune; he rose to be a peer; she was a noted beauty, a leader of fashion, a queen of society—what will all such epitaphs be worth, if God's finger carves silently below them, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord"? *Alexander Maclaren* in *First Kings.*

Are we Right with God to-day? Is His face turned towards us? Do we want it turned towards us? Mr. Robert E. Speer in an address asked these questions, and then told this beautiful little incident:

I was awakened the other morning about four o'clock in my room, by a little voice just beside my bed in the dark, asking for a drink. I got the little lad a drink, and he lay quiet a moment, and then he said: "Father, may I sing myself to sleep?" "Yes, little boy, go ahead."

But soon he got up so much enthusiasm that I told him he had better stop, or none of the rest of us could sleep. Then he was quiet awhile, but soon I heard his little voice again in the perfect stillness of the night: "Father, have you got your face turned towards me?"

"Yes, little boy," and the darkness was as the light of day to him.

The Brick and the Watch. "I broke a brick in the parlor fire-place," sobbed a little girl who was heart-broken over this "sin." "And how did you do it?" questioned her mother. "Why, I was just pounding it with father's watch!"

What a multitude of people there are who see their sins as that little maiden did, the Omris who regret their failure to win a battle, but heed not their failure to win God, bemoaning the broken brick but caring not for the battered watch! The Hebrew historians never fail to see each man's character in the light of God's approval or disapproval, and the ever-recurring burden of their story is "He did that which was right," or "that which was evil, in the sight of the Lord"; they made no mistake as to the one thing that matters in each one's life, his relationship to God. Seek first His kingdom and righteousness.

SENTENCE SERMONS

Whatever we are or have or do, is important only in connection with the religious bearing of our lives. *Gladstone.*

Many a man's heart is like some Kaffir's hut, so full of idols that there is hardly room to turn around. *D. L. Moody.*

It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness;
For the throne is established by righteousness. Prov. 16.12.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

We were discussing ideals in class, and one young man declared that Rockefeller was his ideal. "Mr. Rockefeller is an example of several admirable qualities," I said; "in what respect is he your ideal?" "Solely because of his ability to make money," he replied, "the one thing I intend to get in life, at whatever cost, is money." "Then you are an idolater," I told him, and he looked amazed at the accusation. Was he not rearing up an altar for a Baal? Are you? What is your ideal? What is the chief object of your life?

"She believed that conscious fellowship with God is the foundation of every strong life, the natural source from which all must derive their power and their peace. Hers was a dedicated soul. She did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. This is Professor Palmer's testimony as to the life of his wife, Alice Freeman Palmer. Why may you not be worthy of such a tribute?

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

While Asa was king of Judah, Omri reigned for twelve years in Israel. Omri showed great wisdom in his choice of the hill Samaria for his capital, and was an able ruler in many ways, but he followed in Jeroboam's sin of idolatry. He died and Ahab his son reigned in his stead. After Ahab had married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon, he erected in Samaria a house and an altar and Asherah for her god Baal, and he himself worshipped Baal. He did more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel before him.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Modern Omris. Omri still lives in those who turn great powers and great openings to dishonorable and unholy uses. (*Parker*).
2. The Mohammedans make an idol of their Koran; do we of our Bible?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Name the first three kings of Judah. 2. Read the whole account in 2 Chronicles 17-20, of Jehoshaphat's reign. (Assign to one pupil especially his Syrian campaign with Ahab, 2 Ch. 18.2-19.3; to another his second reform measures, 2 Ch. 19.4-11; to a third his deliverance from his three enemies, 2 Ch. 20.1-30.) 3. How was his prudence shown? (vv. 1, 2.) 4. His piety? (vv. 3, 4, 6-9.) 5. His prosperity? (vv. 5, 10-13.) 6. What is the meaning of "the Asherim"? (See Bible Dictionary.) 7. Of "the Baalim"? 8. Of "the high places"? 9. Who spoke the words of the Golden Text and on what occasion? 10. Give to one pupil the account of the first Sunday-school, p. 86; to another the account of the largest Sunday-school, p. 86; and next week let them tell what they have read. 11. What is the standpoint of the writers of Kings and Chronicles? (Clipping, p. 21.)

Questions to think about. 1. What is the meaning of "strengthened himself against Israel"? 2. Of "the first ways of David"? 3. Of "his heart was lifted up in the way of Jehovah"? 4. What is your church and school doing to spread the knowledge of the book of the law of the Lord? 5. Do you think our Sunday-school could be improved? 6. What part could our class have in its improvement?

Note-book Work. 1. In your book of "The Kings of Israel," write an account of "Omri's Reign." 2. An account of "The Beginning of Ahab's Reign." 3. Bring to class an account of your own Sunday-school.

LESSON V—JANUARY 29

JEHOSHAPHAT'S GOOD REIGN IN JUDAH

Golden Text

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Mt. 6.33.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 17.1-19. Jehoshaphat's Good Reign in Judah. **T.** 1 Kings 22.1-12. The False Prophecy of Zedekiah. **W.** 1 Kings 22.13-28. The True Prophecy of Micaiah. **T.** 1 Kings 22.29-40. The Prophecy Fulfilled in Ahab. **F.** 2 Chron. 19.1-11. Jehoshaphat's Rebuke by Jehu, the Seer. **S.** 2 Chron. 20.1-30. Jehoshaphat's Victory through Song. **S.** 1 Kings 22.41-50. Splendid Career of a Godly King. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 17.1-13 PRINT vv. 1-6, 9-13 COMMIT vv. 3, 4

1 And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. 2 And he placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 3 And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim, 4 but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. 5 Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honor in abundance. 6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah: and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

9 And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

10 And the fear of Jehovah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11 And some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; the Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. 12 And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles and cities of store. 13 And he had many works in the cities of Judah: and men of war, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *Jehoshaphat his son.* The son of Asa, King of Judah.—*Strengthened himself against Israel.* By garrisoning his towns, verse 2. Israel's King, Ahab, had strengthened himself by his alliance with Sidon, and there was need for Jehoshaphat to strengthen himself against Ahab. He made peace with him later, 1 K. 22.44.

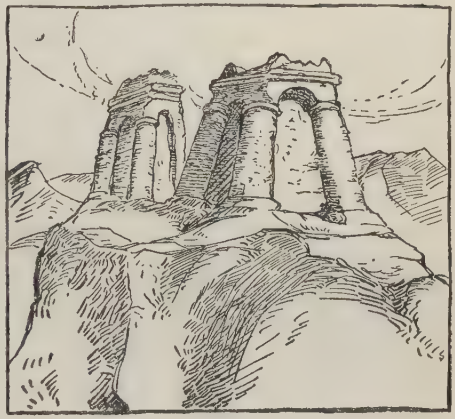
2. *The fortified cities.* Which Rehoboam had fortified, 2 Ch. 11.5.—*Which Asa had taken.* Referred to in 2 Ch. 15.8. See also 13.19, where Abijah, Asa's father, took the cities from Ephraim.

3. *The first ways of his father David. Father* is used in the sense of *ancestor;* the *first ways* may mean the *ancient ways,* or the reference may be to the life of David before his great sin. In the Septuagint Version, *David* is omitted, and thus the reference is to his father Asa, whose first ways were better than his last.—*The Baalim.* This word is the plural of *Baal.* Baal is a common, not a proper, name meaning lord, and it was given to various gods of the heathen.

4. *Walked not after the doings of Israel.* This may refer to the oft-alluded-to sin of Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom, or to the worship of the Sidonian Baal introduced by Ahab, Jehoshaphat's contemporary.

5. *Tribute.* "Probably congratulatory gifts at his accession. Compare 1 Sam. 10.27" (*Barnes*).—*Riches and honor.* Repeated in 18.1.

6. *His heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah.* He was encouraged to follow the commandments of the Lord.—*He took away the high places.* Not all of them or else they were again established: See 1 K. 22.43 and 2 Ch. 20.33. —*High places.* Before the Hebrews took possession of the land the Canaanites had worshipped their gods on the "high places," hill tops; because such places were associated with heathen elements—the stone pillars and wooden poles—they were improper places for the worship of Jehovah.—*Asherim.* Plural of *Asherah.* See last lesson.



Altars on High Places

9. *They taught in Judah.* See Dt. 6.4-9.—*The book of the law of Jehovah.* Whatever part of the Pentateuch had then been written. Copies, of course, were scarce; according to Dt. 17.18, the King must have his own copy.—*They went about throughout the cities and taught.* The first teaching mission recorded in the Bible.

11. *Philistines and Arabians brought tribute.* As they had to Solomon, 2 Ch. 9.13, 14.

12. *He built castles.* "Such small castles or towers lie scattered along the pilgrim-road from Damascus to Mecca at the present day to make the way safe" (*Barnes*).—*Cities of store.* 2 Ch. 11.11, 12 tells what their purpose was.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

3. *Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat.* We are to draw upon this vast resource. An oriental proverb speaks of "casting a noose on a star." Our scientists are doing this on a vast scale, compelling the stars to draw the human chariot; and they are busy harnessing the sea to do the work of the nations. In our moral and spiritual life we need to copy this wisdom. Let the saint avail himself of the spiritual power of God, as the scientist does of the energy of God in matter and mechanics, and he will know no more impossibility or difficulty, or fatigue. *W. L. Watkinson,* in *The Quiet Hour.*

4. *He walked in his commandments.* We may take the high qualities of Jehoshaphat as indicative of the morale of Judah and Jerusalem at this time. Whatever lower elements remained, the city possessed an amount of piety and energy which were preparing for her future. Jerusalem must already have become a place of great magnificence, and we cannot be wrong in believing that under Jehoshaphat life and religion in Judah were inspired and regulated as they had not been since the days of Solomon. *G. A. Smith, Jerusalem.*

5. *Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand.*

When a man's ways please Jehovah,
He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Proverbs 16.7.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

11. *The Arabians brought flocks.* Over Jordan we were never long out of the sound of the lowing of cattle or of the shepherd's pipe. The import of sheep and other cattle from Eastern Palestine and Arabia to Jerusalem has been constant through the centuries. The greater amount of the spoil taken by kings of Judah from Arab tribes was in sheep. *G. A. Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Read chapters 17-20 of 2 Chronicles and chapter 22 of 1 Kings.

In the kingdom of Israel change of dynasties was frequent, four dynasties and six kings during the period we have already studied, but throughout the kingdom of Judah there was an unbroken succession of kings of the house of David, according to the promise. Rehoboam, Abijah, and Asa were the first three kings of Judah. Two weeks ago we studied about Asa's good reign. See his history, p. 64. In the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel, Asa "slept with his fathers and his son Jehoshaphat reigned in his stead." Jehoshaphat was one of the best kings of Judah. He was thirty-five years old at his accession, and he ruled twenty-five years.

Our lesson takes up the beginning of his reign, when he strengthened his kingdom and increased his power, and in the third year of his reign sent out travelling preachers to instruct the people in the law. He ended the long-continued warfare of Judah and Israel by making peace with Ahab, and he seems afterwards somewhat subordinate to Ahab, bound if called upon to furnish aid in Ahab's wars with other nations. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram was married to Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and probably of Zezebel, an alliance that later brought great disaster upon Judah. Jehoshaphat agreed to join Ahab in his attempt to recover Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians, for "My people are as thy people," he told Ahab. A number of prophets, professing to speak the word of the Lord, predicted success, but Micaiah, whom Ahab hated because he always prophesied evil concerning him, declared that Ahab would be slain and the battle lost. Ahab ordered Micaiah imprisoned and went into battle disguised; a chance shot killed him, but Jehoshaphat escaped. "Shouldest thou help the wicked and love them that hate Jehovah? Jehovah is wroth with thee," the prophet Jehu declared to Jehoshaphat on is return from the defeat.

Unlike Ahab under similar circumstances (see 1 K. 20.43), Jehoshaphat accepted the reproof and gave himself to earnest furtherance of reform in his kingdom. He himself went out among the people "to bring them back to Jehovah," and he appointed judges in all the walled towns, giving them admirable instructions, and a court of appeals at Jerusalem.

Three enemies united and menaced Judah—the people of Moab and Ammon and Mount Seir—marching around the southern end of the Dead Sea to Engedi on its western shore. Jehoshaphat's heart was struck with terror at this formidable host; he proclaimed a fast and gathered a great national assembly at Jerusalem to ask help of Jehovah. Strong in his faith, he prayed for help. The answer came by a prophetic voice of a Levite, Jahaziel, bidding the people "Fear not, nor be dismayed," and counselling them to go at once as spectators, not as combatants, to witness Jehovah's power against their enemy. On the morrow they went ten miles away to the wilderness of Tekoa, the white-robed Levitical choir at their head singing the anthem "Give thanks unto Jehovah, for his mercy endureth forever." From an emminence they saw the destruction that had come upon their foe, for strife had arisen in the confederate host and they had turned their arms against one another. "There were none that escaped." The people of Judah spent three days in stripping the dead bodies, and then with their great spoil returned to Jerusalem after giving thanks to Jehovah for their deliverance.

Jehoshaphat formed a shipping alliance with Ahaziah, the son and successor of Ahab, but the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. He joined Jehoram, king of Israel, Ahaziah's successor, in a successful expedition against the Moabites, after receiving Elisha's promise of victory.

And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are the places mentioned. The Philistines were the ancient foe of the Hebrews, whose territory extended along the southern sea coast. The Arabians were the desert dwellers of the peninsula south of Judah.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Let the one thing that you teach about Jehoshaphat be his sending out teachers throughout all the cities of Judah, to teach children as well as grown people the commandments of God. Describe a frontier school which your church or denomination is helping to support and let your pupils see how cheerful and pleasant their own building is and how much the less fortunate need help. Tell them about Mr. Raike's Sunday School and, if there is time, about the great Sunday School at Stockport, third Topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. What things do you own that you count good? If you use them much, what happens? Do all things that we use wear out in time? Do our bodies wear out? Do we ourselves, our spirits, wear out?

What is the Golden Text for to-day's lesson? Who spoke these words? You remember that they were in one of our early lessons last year: from what great sermon, as we call it, are they taken? Where in Matthew is the Sermon on the Mount? Let us turn to it in our Bibles. What does the nineteenth verse of the sixth chapter say? Christ was talking about good things, treasures, that wear out, and treasures that last forever. What did He call the latter? What are treasures in heaven? Good things are treasures on earth; good deeds are treasures in heaven. Things wear out, our bodies wear out, but we ourselves, our characters that lead us to do good deeds, last forever. What lasts Christ bids us seek first, because of the most importance.

Why was this verse chosen as our Golden Text? What has it to do with our lesson? Did Jehoshaphat know about the Sermon on the Mount? How long before Christ did he live? Yet he seems to have made God's Kingdom and His righteousness his chief concern on becoming king. What words show this?

For Older Pupils. We all know what wonderful progress Japan has made in recent years. Baron Shibusawa, the chief of the honorary commissioners of Japan who has visited the United States, talked freely about the future of his country. The *Youth's Companion* calls attention to his words, so significant from the leader of an oriental people. Baron Shibusawa declared that the teaching of the past is not sufficient for the new Japan. Exactly what the new faith is to be, he would not predict, but he is sure that it must teach the salvation of man by some power outside himself, and emphasize the necessity of righteousness in the daily life. The highest success in commercial pursuits he has found can be based only on actions consistent with righteous living, and he is convinced that the moral and educational life of any nation can be progressive only so far as it is sincerely based on religion.

His words indicate the acceptance of the spirit and the ideals of Christianity, if not the actual doctrines of the faith. They should give Christians everywhere renewed assurance of the vitality of their religion. A text for Baron Shibusawa's address might have been found in the Bible itself. The Japanese statesman was echoing across the ages the wisdom of Solomon: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Last week we saw that sin is a reproach to any people. This week we see that righteousness exalteth a nation.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Seek ye First His Kingdom and His Righteousness

The Supreme Thing. Jehoshaphat put first things first. He was first of all a keeper of God's commandments. He made that his chief concern, subordinating to it all other interests. Somewhere I have read this helpful comparison between life and railroad tracks that is applicable here: We should have sidings and switches for the things of lesser importance and leave the main track clear for the most important. The man in the signal tower throws over a steel arm and the switch of the siding is open; along comes an accommodation train and slips into its siding, another pull on the lever, and the ac-

commodation train is locked in. The express train thunders by on the main track, and the engineer knows that the accommodation is on the siding and the track is clear. He has confidence in time tables and the block system and the man in the tower. Now the switch can be opened and the accommodation train can go ploddingly on its way, sure that when it is time for another express train there will be another signal tower, and another prompt hand on the lever, and another siding. We should have a true sense of proportion, put on the siding the amusements and recreation, and on the main track the duty of the day; the siding for the newspaper, the main track for the Bible; the siding for self-gratification, the main track for helpfulness. Keep before you as a model the man in the signal tower, with his hand on the lever, and his sense of the supremacy of expresses.

Right and Wrong Emphasis. The philosophical member of the family was observed to be looking intently at his type-writing machine, and apparently in a brown study.

"What deep moral lesson are you drawing from the old machine?" asked a family cynic, with a sarcastic smile.

"Well," replied the other, after a moment's silence, "I am studying the indentations on the cylinder. The letters, I suppose, in all these years have been superimposed on one another in endless permutation, but some have struck deeper than others and these are the ones that have left their impress the clearest. For instance, there is what seems to be a row of periods and of the letters *b* and *v* in every line, from beginning to end. Everything else is blurred, but these can be clearly made out; and in actual work, you must remember, none of the three is used nearly as often as the others."

"What moral do you draw from that?"

"Only this: Somewhere in the machinery of our being there is a part that receives the impress of our deeds. It is not the things we do the oftenest that leave their record the most legibly upon us, by which they may be known and read, but those which by reason of the emphasis we put upon them, or of some defect in our mental and moral constitution, are out of harmony with the rest of the machine. In other words, the things that mar and disfigure the record of our lives are the deepest and most ineffaceable. They are the scars. We are making them every day and some day somebody will read us even as I am reading this old machine, and will find out our weaknesses, our ruling inclinations, and where we have put the emphasis of our being."

And the cynic in his turn, went into a brown study. *Youth's Companion.*

II All These Things Shall be Added Unto You

What the Promise means. Jehoshaphat sought God and kept his commandments, *therefore* God established the kingdom in his hands, and all Judah brought tribute, and he had riches and honor in abundance. This thought, that good fortune follows good conduct, ill-fortune ill conduct, is assumed in the Old Testament books and is not lacking in the New. What is the present experience? Do riches and honor *always* come to the one who keeps the commandments? Do those who seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness have all things added?

That good fortune has no connection with merit no one would assert. Dr. A. E. Winship has placed side by side the records of the descendants of Jonathan Edwards, one of the great ministers of the eighteenth century, and those of Max Jukes, the notorious criminal, and the result is well worthy of study. Twelve hundred descendants of Jukes had been traced and three hundred and ten of them were professional paupers, four hundred were physical wrecks in early life, sixty were habitual thieves, one hundred and thirty were grosser criminals, seven were murderers. The descendants of Jonathan Edwards were not so easily classified, but at least one hundred and twenty of them were graduates of Yale University, sixty were eminent physicians, over a hundred were clergymen, missionaries and theological professors, eighty were notable statesmen, one hundred were lawyers, thirty were judges. Riches and honor came to Jonathan Edwards' family because he and his descendants followed after righteousness, while poverty and disgrace were the portion of Max Jukes and his descendants who inherited evil and continued to commit deeds of evil.

Righteous character, as a rule, does have a commercial value. Nevertheless it is sadly true, as Pope tells us, that

Sometimes virtue starves while vice is fed;

but the question which he couples with this line—

Well! Is the reward of virtue bread?

shows us wherein we may have been wrongly expectant. Virtue does often starve while vice is fed; bread is not the reward of virtue. All these things shall be added unto you does not mean that the righteous are promised all the good material things in this world. The only perfect Man had not where to lay His head. But it is grandly true, as Emerson says, that in the nature of the soul is the compensation for the inequalities of condition. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth before God, Ecc. 8.12, 13.

True Riches and Honor. In "The Folly of Unbelief," Dr. Jowett says: "I keep a flower garden, and my neighbor over the way keeps bees. Every day his bees visit my flowers, drinking up their finest nectar, and retreating, heavily laden, to increase my neighbor's wealth. My neighbor sends me no supply of honey in return for what his bees obtain from me. The only return I get is an occasional sting! Well, shall I give up the flower garden? Surely, even if I receive no honey, there are stores of delight in the flowers themselves. Let us seek our satisfaction in the flowers we grow."

Let us find our comfort, not in the return that duty may bring, but in the duty itself. Let us see our reward, not in the riches and honor that righteousness may win, but in the nature of the soul that righteousness creates. A poor little waif was lying in the sick ward of one of Dr. Barnardo's homes, and talking to a friendly visitor about the good Doctor. Suddenly the door opened and Dr. Barnardo entered. "That's 'im," the boy almost shouted in his excitement, "That's 'im, don't he look 'appy? He seems as if he was always lookin' for a 'ead to pat." True riches and honor were Dr. Barnardo's.

III Bible Schools

Teachers sent out. Jehoshaphat knew that he could not keep his people true to God unless they understood what were God's commandments and principles of right conduct. He appointed five princes to oversee the work of instruction, and with nine Levites and two priests they went from city to city in Judah to read and explain the law of God.

So in our land the Christian churches send out teachers to lonely places where there are no churches, that the people may learn how to worship and obey God. Before these teachers came to them some of the people in the thinly settled regions of the West and in the mountainous districts of the South knew as little about God's commandments as did the people in the cities of Judah before Jehoshaphat sent teachers to them. What is your church doing to instruct people who are less fortunately situated?

The Text-book. The text-book which the teachers for Judah used was as much of the Bible as had been written in those days, probably part of what we call the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. This was their only book.

When Mr. Choate was our ambassador to England he recalled in an address the time in our country's history when the people had only one book. "The Pilgrim Fathers carried their only possession of lasting value to the New England from the shores of old England. That wonderful possession was King James' Bible. Upon it the new state was founded. It was their only readable book. It was the "Ark of the Covenant," and within its sacred covers they found

"Their shelter from the stormy blast
And their eternal home."

And then Mr. Choate described one of their Bibles that has been kept till now,

its leaves "dog-eared" and worn thin from use, for in every family in those days the Bible was read through twice a year, from Genesis to Revelation.

The First Bible-school. Men, women, and children listened to the teachers sent out by King Jehoshaphat just as to-day they listen to the teachers in our Bible Schools, only they did not wait for the Sabbath but had their Bible Schools on all the days of the week.

Do you not think it strange that more than two thousand years passed by before there were anywhere any organized Sunday-schools? It was not till the end of the eighteenth century after Christ that children were gathered into schools and taught the word of God.

Of course you know about the first Sunday-school of all, the one that was established by Robert Raikes in Gloucester, England. Pin-making was the great industry of Gloucester, and great numbers of small children worked in the factories. They had no time to study during the week, and on Sundays they only met in the street to quarrel and fight. These neglected children, half clothed, half fed, aroused Mr. Raikes' sympathy; his sympathy led him to think what could be done for them. Soon he had the children gathered in four different places and taught how to read and write by four women whom he paid for their services. The Bible was their reading book. In a famous letter written in 1784 Mr. Raikes has told how the school was conducted. "The children were to come soon after ten in the morning and stay till twelve; they were to go home and return at one, and, after reading a lesson, they were to be conducted to church.....They walked before their mistress (teacher) two and two, in as much order as a company of soldiers. After service they all came round to me to make their bow, and, if any animosities had arisen, to make their complaint. The great principles I inculcate is to be kind and good-natured to each other; not to provoke one another; to be dutiful to their parents; not to offend God by cursing and swearing, and such plain precepts as all may comprehend. ..... After church they were employed in repeating the catechism till half past five, and then dismissed with an injunction to go home without making a noise, and by no means to play in the street."

The Largest Bible-school. In our country there are two famous Sunday-schools with over 3,000 members, but they cannot compare in size with the oldest and largest Sunday-school in the world at Stockport, a town that is not very large, in the north of England. This school is undenominational and is supported by almost all the "sects." It has over five hundred teachers and many thousand scholars. About fifty years ago they gave "an afternoon tea," and it took three hundred and fifty-two pounds of corned beef and one hundred pounds of boiled ham to make the sandwiches! In this school pupils enter as infants and usually leave it only when they move away or die. A prominent New York man crossed the ocean every June for thirty-seven years to take part in the annual procession through the town. Every December they have an annual concert, and the third Sunday in November is another red-letter day, when they have their annual sermon and collection.

But from what we hear about some of our foreign mission schools, Stockport will have to look to her laurels. In Korea the adults come in such numbers that there is no room for the children. In China there is this sign in a Chinese house: "Notice! English taught here up to the letter G": that teacher had learned seven letters of the English alphabet and was anxious to teach them to those who did not know so much! Equally anxious are the Chinese converts to Christianity to make known to others their knowledge of the book of the law, and when such a spirit exists great schools and great results will follow.

SENTENCE SERMONS

He who aids another strengthens more than one. *Lucy Larcom.*

The fear of the Lord resting on a spirit will, like a burden or water jug on a woman's shoulder, make the carriage upright and the steps firm. *Maclaren.*

I magnify the immediate desire and minimize the ultimate goal, and so "things do not come right"! *J. H. Jowett.*

Thrust down among the conflicting motives of life a bigger motive—seek ye first the Kingdom. *G. Ernest Darlaston.*

The education in things spiritual and moral, even more than the education

of the head and the hands, is necessary to the making of the highest type of civilization. *Theodore Roosevelt.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Asa died and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead. Asa had been a good king; his son stepped into his place, continued his good work, and did still more for his kingdom and the true worship of God. Every son and daughter should follow in the steps of Christian parents.

The heart of Jehoshaphat was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah. There is a good lifting up and a bad lifting up of the heart. The king's heart was not lifted up with pride and arrogance because of his riches and honor, but with gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts which stimulated him to increased earnestness and zeal to do His will. It is well with us when increasing prosperity leads to increasing spirituality, when a blessing upon a service rendered encourages to greater effort.

Jehoshaphat was not content to know and follow God's law himself, he did what he could to teach all his people to worship the true God aright. The Kingdom in which we have influence may be very small, but our responsibility therein can not be evaded.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

When Jehoshaphat came to the throne of Judah Israel was still hostile, and his first work was to strengthen the kingdom by placing strong garrisons throughout the land and also in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken. He was a good ruler because obedient to God's commandments as Asa and David had been before him. All Judah brought him tribute, and he had great riches and honor, which encouraged him to still greater zeal in God's service. He destroyed the idolatrous places of worship, but he realized that this was not enough, that in order to keep his people from worshiping idols he must teach them how to worship God. Accordingly in the third year of his reign he sent out five princes with seven Levites and two priests to travel from city to city and teach the people the book of the law of Jehovah. Seeing the prosperity of Judah, neighboring kingdoms feared the power of Jehovah and ceased their warfare; some of the Philistines brought silver and other tribute, and the Arabians brought vast numbers of rams and goats. Thus Jehoshaphat's prosperity increased, and he was able to build towers and storehouses and other works in abundance, and to increase the size of his army in Jerusalem.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Special missions to cities. 2. The home mission work of our church.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Why is Elijah commonly spoken of as wearing a hairy mantle? (Compare Zech. 13.4 and the description of John the Baptist, "the Elijah that was to come," Mt. 3.4.) 2. How do we know that Elijah was an athlete? (1 K. 18.46.) 3. When John the Baptist suddenly appeared, what was the first question asked him? Why? 4. Whom did Jesus say was Elijah? (Mt. 11.14.) 5. What is said in Malachi about Elijah? (Mal. 4.5.) 6. For what was the drought a punishment? (1 K. 16.31-33.) 7. What does James say was the secret of Elijah's power over the rain? (Jas. 5.17-18.) 8. What reference did Jesus make to the widow of Zarephath? (Lk. 4.25, 26.) 9. What were the three great products of Palestine? (Dt. 7.13; 2 Ch. 32.28; Hos. 2.8.)

Questions to think about. 1. Why did Elijah say, "As Jehovah liveth"? 2. What did he mean by saying, "before whom I stand"? 3. How does God speak now? 4. How could Elijah hide by the brook Cherith? 5. How did the widow know that Elijah was an Israelite whose God was Jehovah? 6. What miracle of Christ's is recalled by the widow's unfailing jar and cruse?

Note-book Work. 1. In your book of "The Kings of Judah," write an account of "Jehoshaphat's Reign."

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 5

ELIJAH THE PROPHET APPEARS IN ISRAEL

Golden Text

They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Ps. 34.10.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 17.1-7. The Prophet's Note of Defiance. **T.** 1 Kings 17.8-16. The Undiminishing Meal and Cruse of Oil. **W.** 1 Kings 17.17-24. The Widow's Son Restored. **T.** Ps. 37.1-27. The Righteous Upheld in Famine. **F.** Matt. 10.16-42. Receiving a Prophet's Reward. **S.** Luke 4.16-30. Elijah Sent only to Zarephath. **S.** James 5.1-20. Elijah a Man of Like Passions with ourselves. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 17 PRINT vv. 1-16 COMMIT vv. 14-16

1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2 And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of Jehovah; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8 And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. 12 And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel. The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah; and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days. 16 The jar of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by Elijah.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

Read the entire story of Elijah. 1 K. 17.1-2 K. 2.14.

1. *Elijah.* The name means "Jehovah is my God," and typifies the prophet's life mission of bearing witness of Jehovah as the one only true God.—*The Tishbite.* See the Geographical Background.—*The sojourners of Gilead.* Elijah was one of those from the tribe of Naphtali who dwelt for a time in Gilead.—*As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth.* The usual form of an oath.—*Before whom I stand.* Whose servant I am.—*There shalt not be dew nor rain.* The punishment threatened by Moses for a falling away from serving Jehovah, Dt. 11.16, 17. The reason for this drought is not stated, but without doubt it was

the idolatry of Ahab and his people, 1 K. 16.31-33, and the purpose of the prediction was to prove that Jehovah was the sole Ruler of nature, there could be no other gods.—*These years.* In the third year, 1 K. 18.1: three years and six months, Lk. 4.25, and Jas. 5.17. Three and one-half, being half of the mystical number seven, is explained as having become the traditional duration of a great calamity.—*But according to my word.* The word which I speak at the command of the Lord, 18.1, 36. He prayed fervently that it might not rain, and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, Jas. 5.17, 18.

2. *The word of Jehovah came unto him.* See p. 94.

3. *Get thee hence.* To avoid the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel. Compare 1 K. 18.13.—*Hide thyself by the brook Cherith.* There he would find convenient caves.—*Before.* East of.

4. *I have commanded.* "The command means as much as to make use of them in the execution of his purpose."—*The ravens.* It is often objected that the raven is classed among the unclean birds, Lev. 11.15, but it is only as food that they are there decreed unclean. Many think that instead of *ravens* we should read *Arabs,* by changing a single vowel in the Hebrew, and others explain that *merchants* are meant. That Elijah was miraculously fed by the ravens is no more difficult to believe than that he was miraculously fed by the widow's unfailing jar and cruse: the divine care of the man of God is equally shown, whether or not the events can be accounted for by known laws.

6. *The ravens brought bread and flesh.* "Those who have watched the habits of large birds can bear witness to the large supply which they bring home under ordinary circumstances" (*Lumby*).

9. *I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee.* Christ refers to Elijah as a prophet who being dishonored in his own country went and conferred a great blessing upon a foreigner, Lk. 4.25, 26. "Perhaps we are to suppose that, just as the ravens were commanded and knew not by whom, so this woman received the command, when she saw the travel-stained and gaunt stranger, through her womanly impulses of compassion, not knowing who moved them nor what she did when she sheltered the man whose life was, at that moment, the most important in the world." (*Maclaren.*)

12. *As Jehovah thy God liveth.* She would recognize Elijah as an Israelite by his speech and garb.—*The jar...the cruse.* Notice the definite articles; every household was provided with these two receptacles.—*Oil.* Olive oil.—*My son.* Jewish tradition declares this son to have been Jonah, the prophet.

13. *Go on and do as thou hast said.* Go on with good courage, and hope for better things (*Josephus*).—*Make me therefore a little cake first.* A severe test of her faith.

14. *The jar of meal shall not waste.* Compare the miracle of the feeding of the Five Thousand.

15. *She went and did according to the saying of Elijah.* "Charity and mercy have no geographical limits."

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *Elijah.* "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This is part of the very last sentence of the very last book of the Old Testament; in other words, it has been placed where it must stand for a kind of climax of all that the Lord had chosen to reveal to His ancient people. The time was one of uncertainty and apprehension. These Jews, lately returned from their exile in Babylon, were much perplexed, and in danger of complete demoralization. To save them from this, the prophet gives a clear promise of the coming day of their God; and to make this promise as clear and expressive and impressive as it could possibly be made, he names it from a man. "I will send you Elijah." Think what a tremendous impression that man Elijah must have made on the people of his own age—that now, five hundred years after he was dead, his name should still seem more significant than any other word in the entire Hebrew vocabulary to show men what the day of God must be! *William Richards,* in *For Whom Christ Died.*

1. *There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.* Now Menander mentions this drought in his account of the acts of Ethbaal,

King of the Tyrians; where he says thus: "Under him there was a want of rain from the month Hyperberetæus till the month Hyperberetæus of the year following." By these words he designed the want of rain that was in the days of Ahab; for at that time it was that Ethbaal also reigned over the Tyrians, as Menander informs us. *Josephus, Antiquities.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

1. *Of Gilead.* All the characteristics of the man are in keeping with his birth and early training—a Gileadite. For Gilead, then as now, was a land of nomads, wild, rough men, half shepherds, half cattle-lifters. The prophet's dress proclaimed the mountaineer of the Arabian border, exactly the same as is worn to-day: the undergarment bound with a broad leather belt, and over it a loose, coarse cloak of sheepskin, with the wool outside, its dark-brown folds floating in the wind as he hurriedly strode along with head bare and long black locks covering his neck: for he was a Nazarite. The Moslem prophet-dervish, as different from the dervish of the towns as Elijah from a Levite of Jerusalem, exactly copies this dress and habit. He has no settled home; no man knows his route. I have known one startle an Arab party at a feast by his sudden apparition, ejaculating some verses of the Koran, warning his listeners against the Giaours, and calling on them to fight for "the faith," and then stalk forth from the awe-stricken company to seek shelter and food from the humblest and poorest, who receive his visit as the highest of honors. *Tristram,* in *Eastern Customs.*

12. *A cake.* A small round loaf of bread.—*A jar.* The meal is still kept in an earthen jar to prevent its being destroyed by insects.—*A little oil.* The chief products of the Hebrews were corn, wine and olive oil, much of which was exported to Tyre and the Egyptian market. Olive oil took the place of our butter in the preparation of food, and was also used for light, for anointing, and in the burial of the dead. Syrians of to-day prefer the oil to butter, which cannot be kept easily in their hot climate. Sometimes they fry their dough in oil, instead of baking it.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

With the 17th chapter of 1 Kings we enter upon wholly different scenes. Somewhat monotonously we have been told hitherto of the Kings of Israel and of Judah, good kings and bad kings, kings who worshipped Jehovah and kings who thought Jehovah and Baals might be worshipped side by side. Now we pass for a time from kings to prophets, from formal statements to graphic narratives, from the history of both kingdoms to that of the northern kingdom exclusively. See page 22 of the Introduction.

Elijah came in one of the darkest periods of the history of the northern kingdom. Life was corrupt. Jeroboam had set the downward pace by his establishment of the worship of Jehovah through the calves at Dan and Bethel; it had gained momentum under Omri and Ahab, and threatened soon to strike the lowest level, that of the pagan neighbors. Some of the people, especially priests and Levites, had shown their disapproval by leaving the northern kingdom for Jerusalem; in the time of Asa, king of Judah, "They fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him." So many left, that King Baasha thought it worth while to fortify Ramah "that he might not suffer any one to go out or come in to Asa, king of Judah." Schools of the prophets had been formed in various places and they had established altars for the true worship of Jehovah. At their head was Elijah; at the head of the Baal worshippers was Queen Jezebel.

Jezebel undertook to annihilate the prophets and thought herself successful, but Obadiah, who was over the king's household, feared Jehovah and hid a hundred prophets in caves and fed them with bread and water, 1 K. 18.3, 4. The time for heroic action had come.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, the people had learned under Moses: His champion now is the stern, uncompromising Gileadite, Elijah. The abruptness with which he is introduced is often commented upon, and many believe that the words of our first verse are the prophet's ultimatum, following an omitted talk with king Ahab. But all his appearances are unannounced and

From the "Standard Bible Dictionary,"
(Funk & Wagnalls Company)

AN EASTERN JORDAN WADY OR BROOK-RAVINE

sudden. "The great man was always as lightning out of heaven," Carlyle comments; "the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they, too, would flame."

There is no parallel account of Elijah's activities in Chronicles, for that book is chiefly interested in Judah.

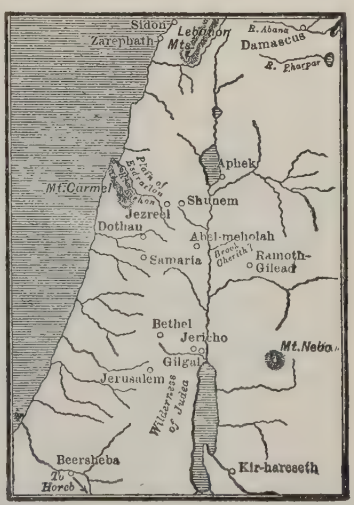
THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Elijah is called the *Tishbite,* from Thisbe, whose location in Gilead has not been discovered. Gilead lay on the eastern side of the Jordan, from Moab on the south to the Yarmuk River on the north, but was a part of the northern kingdom. It is a land of broad plains and rocky hills. Speaking of the people of Gilead, Dean Farrar says: "They were the Highlanders of Palestine, and the name of their land implies its barren ruggedness. Though of Israelitish origin, they were closely akin to the Bedouin, swift, strong, temperate, fond of the great solitudes of nature, haters of cities, scorners of the softness of civilization. Elijah showed these characteristics."

The brook *Cherith,* that is before the Jordan, was a winter torrent, somewhere in Gilead doubtless, as "before Jordan" means "east of Jordan." The wady Kelt behind Jericho is the traditional brook. As Professor Shailer Mathews says in the *Biblical World,* "The identification may be groundless, but as one creeps down its steep banks, along and under the two conduits that once carried water to the palaces of Jericho, it is not difficult to see how it arose. Shut in by precipices arising to hundreds of feet, with hermits of all nations living in little huts perched half way up the cliffs, the ancient monastary of St. George clinging like the houses of Amalfi to its rocky sides, the wady is utterly remote from the world that lives beyond its hills and is the natural retreat of all who seek religious seclusion. The ride along the path that skirts its farther cliff is one not soon to be forgotten; every sense is alive to the beauty and the awfulness of the canon itself. If it be not the brook Cherith, it is at least a worthy rival."

From Gilead to *Zarephath* was a journey of 90 miles. Probably Elijah traveled at night up the Jordan valley and across the foothills of Lebanon to the Mediterranean. Zarephath (Sarepta, Lk. 4.26), was on the coast eight miles south of Sidon, near the modern village of Sarafend. It would be the last place where Jezebel would look for him, because it was in her father's kingdom.

A Moslem wely, to quote the words of Professor Shailer Mathews, marks the site of the Crusaders chapel that, in its turn, marked the spot where the prophet lived and wrought his miracles. Here one comes upon the Moslem saint, however, rather than the Hebrew seer. Within the wely there is no tomb, but an empty recess covered by a curtain. For the Mohammedans hold that Elijah is not dead but flies "round and round the world," and once a week, on Thursday nights, he returns to this little wely, filling it with such light that no one dare enter. And in this borderland of faith and superstition Elijah as beyond Jordan vanishes.



Places connected with the Life of Elijah

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

The story of Elijah is one of the most interesting for little people in the whole Bible, revealing as it does "things surpassing fable, and yet true." You remember that Hilda, in Hawthorne's tale, remarks: "It annoys me very much, this inclination which most people have to explain away the wonder and the

mystery out of everything." Children delight in wonder and mystery,—they do not question its truth, and we have now come to a series of lessons about Elijah and Elisha so full of wonder and mystery that they will almost "teach themselves" to your pupils.

Let them see Elijah in his rude robe standing straight and tall, fearlessly looking into the eyes of King Ahab and telling him that a famine shall come to his land because he and his people no longer worship and obey God. Tell them of the king's anger, his wish to kill Elijah, and of Elijah's escape. Make the scene at the brook very vivid. Elaborate the thought of God's care of the birds and of his children (Approach for Younger Pupils). Tell in dialogue form the story of Elijah and the poor woman of Zarephath, and speak of her son's wonder and perhaps anger at seeing her give away all the food they had. Gods care is your theme. Tell them about Helen Keller, p. 95. You will find in the third Topic more material for your pupils than you will have time to use.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils.

Who provideth for the raven his prey,
When his young ones cry unto God,
And wander for lack of food?

This question is asked in one of the Old Testament books (Job); what is your answer? Can you give an answer from Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount which we studied last year? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. At another time Jesus said that not a sparrow could fall to the ground without the heavenly Father's notice. The New Testament tells us that God cares for the birds. Here in the Old Testament we are told that He cared for one man through the help of the birds. What birds? What man? Where? Elijah was at the brook Cherith in hiding: why?

For Older Pupils. What do you know about Elijah? If you were the editor of an international "Who's Who" in the middle of the ninth century B. C., the greatest name in all your record would be Elijah, but you could not tell where or when he was born, who his parents were, how he was brought up, where he lived and what he did during most of his life. Elijah came no one knows whence, he always appeared suddenly, and as suddenly disappeared, and yet he is one of the Titans of the Old Testament, and indeed of all literature. He so dominated the Hebrew imagination afterwards, that when Jesus wrought His mighty works the common people explained Him by saying that He was Elijah. To this day he dominates the imagination of the orthodox Jew, who on the Passover evening places a cup on the table for the "prophet of Redemption." Majestic, stern, relentless, full of indignation at the people's apostacy, burning with zeal for Jehovah, this heroic prophet, this man of action, accomplished a noble work.

"The secret of true art," said the great French artist, Millet, "is to paint what one does not see." "What does that tell you?" he once asked an artist friend as he showed him a small canvas. It was a simple scene, picturing a country lane with a few dandelions and four o'clocks growing in the grass. "I don't know what I see," answered the friend after a long study of the picture, "but I hear the nightingale!"

Such true art is the story of Elijah as portrayed in the first Book of Kings. We don't know what we see but we hear the thunder and the very words of God.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Consciousness of the Divine Presence

Before Whom I stand. "Jehovah is my God" is the meaning of the name Elijah bore, and it is the meaning of his life. His mission was to bring back apostate Israel to allegiance to the one only true God. And when he uttered his stern words to King Ahab, declaring that the famine had come as surely as Jehovah liveth, before whom he stood, he expressed the conviction that

guided his life, his belief in God's constant presence ever with him, and his determination to serve Him faithfully and well, at whatever cost. Happy are these thy servants that stand before thee and hear thy wisdom, the Queen of Sheba observed to King Solomon: blessed are those servants who, like Elijah, stand before the King of Kings, hear His wisdom and obey His behests.

Whether we know it or not, we all stand continually before God.

O Power, more near my life than life itself
I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear,
Seeing, to know Thee not. *Lowell.*

When the professor had spoken we stood for a moment silent, writes Mr. David Grayson in "Adventures in Contentment." Then he smiled and said briskly: "I have been a botanist for fifty-four years. When I was a boy I believed implicitly in God. I prayed to Him—a person—before my eyes. As I grew older I concluded that there was no God. I dismissed Him from the universe. I believed only in what I could see, or hear, or feel. I talked about Nature and Reality."

He paused, the smile still lighting his face, evidently recalling to himself the old days. I did not interrupt him. Finally, he turned to me and said abruptly. "And now—it seems to me—there is nothing but God."

Five Senses that help us to Recognize the Presence of God. Here is a peach; how do you recognize it? You see its beauty, feel its velvet surface, catch its fragrance, taste its flavor. Were it not for our five senses what could we know of material things? In like manner, we have spiritual senses that teach us about spiritual things. If you deliberately close your eyes, nose, mouth, and withdraw your hand, the peach still exists but not for you. So if if you deliberately render useless the organs by which knowledge of spiritual realities may reach you, the realities exist, but you know them not.

There is the organ of *intuition.* We may not explain its workings, but we cannot deny its comfort. The human spirit instinctively knows there is a divine Spirit.

"In my body bides a guest
Time-born for Eternity,
Ne'er to mortal manifest;
To my very self unknown;
Visible to God alone,
And revealing Him to me."

There is the organ of *meditation.* Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, we are told: we cannot appreciate the truth of God's abiding presence unless we give thought to the unseen, the spiritual. "Nine folks out o' ten aren't accustomed to think over things at all; an' the machinery that they've got to think with is all rusting for want of use," declares Daniel Quorm. Don't let your thinking machinery rust; don't imagine that your spiritual life can develop without constant meditation upon the truth of God.

There is the organ of *prayer.* Can we appreciate the presence of our friends if we never speak? Neither can we realize the Divine Presence without communion in prayer. God does not come to us guest-wise; He remains with us father-wise. As we know our earthly father through our communion with him, in like manner may we know our heavenly Father.

There is the organ of *obedience.* The truth of that famous saying, "Act as though I were and thou shalt know that I am" any one can prove. "The way to realize the Divine Presence is to practice it; to believe it; and put it to the test," says Wellspring. "Suppose we begin to-morrow morning and try all day to live as if Christ, God's Son, were visible with us. It will keep us patient and sweet at breakfast-time, even if the cereal is scorched, or something else has gone wrong in the kitchen. It will keep us kind and gentle when people jostle against us, and do not do just as we would have them do. It will make us strong to endure temptation when we are put to the test in any way. We will do our work better, more honestly, more conscientiously, more skillfully, because the eye of the Master is on us. It should be possible to practice the Presence of Christ for one little day. If we do this we can

do it a second day, and then a third day. It will bring a new power into our lives, new energy, new fidelity, new joy."

There is the organ of *love*. God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. Dr. W. L. Watkinson instances John Bunyan's little blind daughter, who never saw her father's face, could not read his writings, could not understand his philosophy, but who knew him as did no one else. "She knew him—knew him truly, deeply, blessedly. Our knowledge of God partakes much of the same kind and quality. We are His blind children who feel about Him in the darkness—we know the touch of His hand, the music of His voice, the pulsation of His heart, and the strengthening virtue of His enfolding presence. We know each other through affection and sympathy far more than by any other interpretation; and thus with the heart we find God in the darkness, and, trusting Him like a child, know the child's assurance and peace."

Says the little philosopher, the lad Diamond, in George MacDonald's story "At the Back of the North Wind," "The baby is mine. I love her so." "Does loving a thing make it yours?" questioned his mother. "I think so, mother, at least, more than anything else can. If I didn't love baby, she wouldn't be mine a bit. But I do love baby, and baby is my very own." "The baby is mine, Diamond." "That makes her the more mine, mother." "How do you make that out?" "Because you're mine, mother." "Is that because you love me?" "Yes, because loves makes the only myness," said Diamond. Love can make God our very own. The Lord is *my* Shepherd: love makes the only myness. Love gains God by first leap, says Robert Browning.

II How God Speaks

The Word of the Lord Came. Twice in our lesson we read that "the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying." Some one has counted the number of times that this phrase and the kindred ones, "Thus saith Jehovah" and "Jehovah spake," occur in the Bible, and they are found about two thousand times in the Old Testament alone. What do they mean? That God uttered audible words? But God is Spirit: the Spirit of God speaks to the spirit of man. The phrases are familiar formulas of all the prophets and express their sincere conviction that they are speaking in accordance with the will of God as revealed to them. In the words of Canon Farrar the prophet said, "Thus saith the Lord" whenever he felt himself commissioned to deliver to the people the highest conclusions to which he believed that God had led his thoughts. And we believe that "God did of old speak unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners."

You know that beautiful hymn of George Matheson's—O Love that wilt not let me go. When asked how he came to write it, the blind poet said: "It was composed on the evening of the sixth of June, 1882. Something had happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. *I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice* than of working it out myself." As I read this experience in the biography of Dr. Matheson, it seemed to explain how God spoke to the prophets of old. They lived with God, "thinking God's thoughts after Him," and God revealed His will to them so distinctly that they had the impression of having it dictated to them by some inward voice, word by word.

The Word of the Lord still comes.

> "God's voice is of the heart—I do not say
> All voices therefore of the heart are God's;
> And to discern the Voice amidst the voices
> Is that hard task that we are born to."

Do we attempt it? Do we believe that He speaks to us as He did to men in that old time? He changeth not. Either He never did it or He will do it now. He does speak. Not a few say they hear Him, and their lives attest the truth of what they say. Is their hearing to be invalidated because the clamor and turmoil of the world have made the majority of men deaf? What are the notes by which we may distinguish His voice within from those other voices that whisper in the silence of the soul? It will reprove us for a

neglected duty, point us to an ideal for which we feel little attraction, suggest some self-sacrifice, arouse us out of our own sleepy acquiescence in a round of daily routine, remind us that we are in His presence, under the gaze of His searching eye, the objects of solicitude that seeks our eternal welfare. We may call it a voice or a light, it matters not which. It is a thought, that breaks into our consciousness and for a moment arrests our attention. Whether the whisper shall become louder and more articulate depends upon how we treat it, upon whether we are reverent enough to say, "Speak, Lord for Thy servant heareth." *E. W. Shalders,* in the *Sunday-School Chronicle.*

Sometimes God Speaks to Deaf Ears.

If chosen souls could never be alone
In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
No greatness had been dreamed or done.

It was because the great prophets of old were open-doored to God, as our poet Lowell beautifully expresses the thought, that they heard the word of the Lord when it came to them. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, writing in the *Christian World Pulpit,* draws this suggestive comparison: Helen Keller's mother used to hang over little Helen's cradle, where Helen was all entombed in her little body that weighed fifty pounds, and her ears were deaf, saying: "Oh, Helen, Helen, how I love you! Oh, Helen, what your father and I would do for you! We would work our fingers to the very bone if you could only understand." The mother sobbed her love over little Helen, the dumb girl and the blind girl, and there were not many things in the world so heart-breaking as that mother, as she held this little girl to her bosom. And yet, all the time Helen Keller was saying to herself, "Oh, if mother would only speak to me! Oh why are mothers giving only the whisperings of their love?" Ever little Helen would say: "I wonder if I have a father and mother, and if I have, why clouds and darkness are round about them." When she was seven years of age she began to think that fathers and mothers were only seen through a glass, darkly: and yet her father and mother were breaking their hearts trying to reveal themselves to Helen. Oh, piteous symbol of the heart-broken God leaning over the battlements of His heaven, speaking to us through all the summers, unrolling His will through all the procession of the seasons, giving to us His music in all the solemnity of sweet sounds.

III How God Provides

Special Providences. Elijah was sent to a lonely ravine. Who would care for him there? But Elijah went in faith, and his life was sustained in a wonderful way. Then he was sent to Phœnicia. Who in that heathen land would care for a prophet of Israel? Surely not a widow who had reached the end of her resources! Elijah's trust in God was still undaunted, and the widow's jar of meal and cruse of oil failed not!

Was it only in olden times and among the Hebrew people that God showed His loving care? He does not work what we call miracles now to sustain the life of His people, but how many modern instances can be recalled in which the daily bread has come in such new and unexpected ways as to seem "miraculously" provided!

During the massacre of Saint Bartholomew in the reign of Charles IX of France, pastor Merlin escaped to a farm near Paris and lay concealed for days in a hay-loft. At length he became so nearly starved that he thought he might as well perish by the sword as by hunger, and was about to venture from his hiding place when he saw a hen come in. He waited till she went on her way rejoicing and then found the egg she had laid and this egg enabled him to keep in hiding two days longer. When he escaped, he learned that had he started out earlier he would undoubtedly have been slain.

We call such an instance as this a special providence. We need the comforting assurance that special providences are not rare occurrences. "Mother, I think that God hears when we scrape the bottom of the barrel for it never gets quite empty," said a small lad to his widowed mother who was courageously caring for her little family, but was often anxiously wondering where the next meal would come from. The little comforter's trust in his heavenly Father's care cheered his mother's heart and spurred her on to successful ef-

fort. If our faith were but more simple, we should take Him at His word.

There is always a drought somewhere, and there are always hungry servants of God. Is it the drought only that abides, while the ministering ravens have vanished? We must not forget that all things are God's servants, and our daily bread, however it comes, is still supplied by Elijah's God. We can no more understand how the soil and the sun and the rain can multiply a grain of wheat into many golden ears than we can understand how the widow's jar of meal was multiplied so as to last many months. Is not one as much a miracle to us as the other? The Lord will provide.

They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing, says our Golden Text. Does this mean that they shall have every good thing that they wish? What does it mean? (Second topic, last lesson.)

God provides through Human Agents. The lad had five barley loaves and two fishes, but what were those among so many? Yet in the hands of Christ they failed not till five thousand people were fed. The widow had a handful of meal in the bottom of the jar; how could that feed three famished people? But she scraped the jar, and it fed them not once but a multitude of times.

On one of the small islands of Micronesia there was a mission and to it there came from another island a young woman named Siakwe. She spent six months at the mission and learned to read ten pages in the English primer and a little in the Gilbert Islands Bible, and she committed to memory the ten commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and twenty Christian hymns. Then she returned to her home, and unknown to the missionaries, took up the work of teaching all the people in Nukuor. What she knew was meager, but "she scraped the bottom of her barrel in giving to its last grain her handful of meal." When a missionary finally came to settle on her island he found a miracle had been wrought—the people were all Christians! They could read ten pages in the primer, recite the ten commandments and keep them, pray to God in the words of Jesus, and sing twenty Christian hymns of cheer and comfort. Through Siakwe God had been working. Now there is a little Christian church on the island with a cistern beside it, so that in time of drought water may fail not. Has not Siakwe, like the widow of Zarephath, given food and drink from a very humble store, and has not God wrought the increase?

SENTENCE SERMONS

The noble characters in each generation are the prophets of God. *Mabie.*

Cherith is part of the training for Carmel. *Alexander Maclaren.*

All circumstances are the voice of God, commanding or restraining. *Alexander Maclaren.*

I see the oil of Thy Word will never leave increasing whilst any bring an empty barrel. *Thomas Fuller.*

Is the cruse of comfort failing? rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine it shall serve thee and thy brother.
Mrs. Charles.

Happy and strong and brave shall we be—able to endure all things, and do all things—if we believe that every day, every hour, every moment of our life is in His hands. *Henry van Dyke.*

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Ps. 23.5.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Before whom I stand—that is the thought to keep us from yielding to temptation, for we are accountable to our Lord; it is the thought to put from us fear of others, for our Lord and Master is the one to whom we owe allegiance; it is the thought to give us assurance and cheer, for He is ever near and ever mindful of His own.

What shall I do in that lonely ravine? What shall I do when the brook runs dry? What shall I do in Jezebel's country? Questions such as these Elijah might have asked. His perfect trust in God's care should strengthen our trust in Him.

If we are sincere when we pray, Give us this day our daily bread, we thereby

acknowledge that our food comes from God, that to Him we owe all good things.

What generous giving was the widow's when from her scanty store she fed the stranger first. There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want: the liberal soul shall be made fat.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The Drought predicted, 1. II. Elijah fed at Cherith, 2-7. III. Elijah fed at Zarephath, 8-16. IV. The Widow's Son restored, 17-24.

Before Ahab in his palace in Samaria there suddenly appeared a stern-looking man. It was the prophet Elijah who had come from Gilead across the Jordan to warn him that he should suffer because he and his people were worshipping the heathen god Baal. "As surely as Jehovah the God of Israel liveth," he declared to the king, "there shall be no dew nor rain for years unless I say it." To escape the anger of Ahab and his wife Jezebel (the Phœnician princess who had put to death all the prophets that she could find), Elijah hastened away toward the east and hid in the deep ravine of the brook Cherith. There he was fed in a wonderful way, for we are told that God sent ravens to him with food and the brook furnished him with water.

When the brook dried up he was led to seek a home with a widow in the city of Zarephath. As he approached the gate of the city he saw a woman gathering sticks for a fire, and he said to her, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water to drink." "And bring me a morsel of bread, too," he called after her as she started for the water. "As thy God liveth," she answered him in tones of despair, "there is nothing but a handful of meal and a little olive oil, and I am gathering these sticks that I may bake a bit of bread for my son and myself, that we may eat it and die." "Fear not," said Elijah, "go and do as you had planned, but first make the bread for me and afterwards for yourself and your son, for thus Jehovah saith, the jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that He sends rain upon the earth." The widow heard his words in amazement, but something prompted her to obey him. Elijah's promise was fulfilled, the jar of meal and the cruse of oil failed not as long as the famine lasted. Her faith was later again rewarded, for the prophet restored her son to life. Gladly she acknowledged, "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of Jehovah in thy mouth is true."

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Prophets through whom God speaks to-day. 2. Divine Immanence. 3. Elijah the reformer of Samaria and Savonarola the reformer of Florence.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the entire eighteenth chapter of First Kings. Read Ps. 115. 2. Where is Mt. Carmel? (Clipping, p. 100). 3. What words of the Sermon on the Mount tells the impossibility of "limping between two sides?" (Mt. 6.24.) 4. On what occasion did Joshua offer the people the alternative between serving Jehovah or false gods? (Josh. 24.15.) 5. What did Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount about using vain repetitions in prayer? (Mt. 6.7.) 6. What is the reference in v. 31? (See the margin of your Bible.)

Questions to think about. 1. What reason had Elijah to fear Ahab? 2. What reason had Ahab to fear Elijah? 3. Why did Ahab obey Elijah? 4. Why did Elijah choose Mt. Carmel for the contest? 5. For what purpose was the water? 6. Commit to memory Elijah's prayer. 7. Choose and commit to memory one of Lincoln's striking sayings. (Lincoln's words on p. 102 may be cut out and given to each pupil. As next Sunday is Lincoln's birthday, have a portrait of Lincoln on your classroom wall draped with the flag.)

Note-Book Work. 1. In your "Book of the Prophets" begin an account of Elijah's life in eleven scenes. This lesson is scene I, Elijah's First Appearance in Israel. 2. On a sketch map of Palestine insert and name the mountains.

LESSON VII—FEBRUARY 12

ELIJAH'S VICTORY OVER THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

Golden Text

Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Joshua 24.15.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 18.1-19. The Summons of Elijah unto Ahab. **T.** 1 Kings 18.20-24. "The God that Answereth by Fire." **W.** 1 Kings 18.25-29. The Failure of the Prophets of Baal. **T.** 1 Kings 18.30-40. The Fire of the Lord Fell. **F.** Ex. 14.10-31. Cloud of Light Fighting for Israel. **S.** Jud. 6.1-24. There went up Fire out of the Rock. **S.** Judg. 13.2-20. The Angel Ascended in the Flame. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

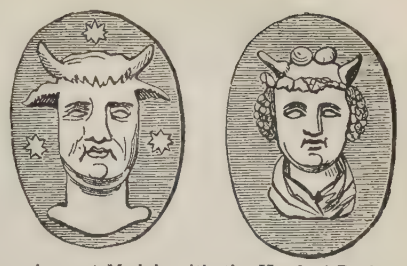
LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 18.1, 2, 17-40 PRINT vv. 25-39 COMMIT vv. 38, 39

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under. 26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. 27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. 28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. 31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. 32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood. 34 And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. 35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. 36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38 Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

26. *Saying, O Baal, hear us.* Either they expected the answer of fire or hoped for a chance to play a trick. In praying, use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do, Mt. 6.7.—*Leaped about the altar.* Dancing accompanied by various bodily contortions was customary at such heathen sacrifices.



Ancient Medals with the Head of Baal

28. *They cried aloud.* Elijah's taunt urges them on to still greater frenzy.—*Cut themselves after their manner.* Compare the law in Lev. 19.28; Dt. 14.1, and see Light from Oriental Life.—*Knives.* Or, *Swords,* RVm.—*Till the blood gushed out.* "The priests of Bellona offered their own blood, which was deemed powerful to move their gods," (*Plutarch,* quoted by Farrar.)

29. *They prophesied.* "They had worked themselves up to a condition of wild, convulsive frenzy, in which they were no longer capable of self-control, but were supposed to be taken possession of by a supernatural power" (*Skinner.*)—*The time of the offering of the evening oblation.* Ex. 29.39. The time was before dusk.

30. *Repaired the altar.* Carmel was a "high place" where God had been worshipped.

31. *Took twelve stones.* Compare Josh. 4.5.—*Israel shall be thy name.* Gen. 32.28. The Northern Kingdom had appropriated to itself the name that belongs to all the tribes.

32. *A trench.* To hold the water poured over the sacrifice, v. 33.—*Two measures of seed,* or, *a two-seah measure,* RVm. The third part of an ephah, about two and a half gallons.

33-35. An account of the precautions taken to let the people see there was no fraud, no concealed fire.—*He put the wood in order.* Lev. 1.7-8.—*Fill with water.* There are perennial springs on Carmel which must have withstood the drought.

36. *The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel.* This reference to the Hebrew fathers was common and served to remind the people of God's favor to them in the past.

37. *And that thou hast turned their heart back again.* Or, *for thou didst turn their heart backward,* RVm.

38. *The fire of Jehovah fell.* Compare 2 Ch. 7.1; Heb. 12.29; Job 1.16.

39. *Jehovah, he is God.* Verses 21, 24.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

28. *They cut themselves after their manner.* Israel's conception of God was incomparably more serious and worthy than that of her neighbors; but the Israelites, too, were Semites, and shared, in their measure, the violence of the Semitic temper. The degenerate worshippers of Hosea's time, in imitation of their heathen neighbors, "cut themselves for the grain and the new wine." But even on truly noble levels, prayer takes a dramatic turn. Most conspicuous in this respect is Ezra—all the more that he is a priest. Before the prayer of confession which he made weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, he tells us that he rent his garment and robe, and plucked off the hair of his head and beard, and sat down confounded. "And at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe rent, and I fell upon my knees and spread out my hands unto Jehovah my God; and I said, 'O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God.'"

It must not, of course, be forgotten that these scenes were not normal. This was not the formal worship of the sanctuary, but a very exceptional occasion. But after making every allowance, it is very probable that, oriental nature being what it was, prayer was more violent than it normally is with us. *John Edgar McFadyen,* in *The Prayers of the Bible.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

27. *He is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth.* The gods of Asiatic

idolaters have different functions to fulfill, and require sleep and rest. Vishnu sleeps four months in the year. Buddha is represented in his temple as asleep, though his eyes are open; and according to many fables in the *Pooranas,* the gods are often on journeys, expeditions. *Adam Clark,* in *Commentary.*

Vishnu Asleep

When, after long pleadings and many offerings, an idol does not respond to the request of the worshipper, the people have been known to bore a hole in the back of the idol and place therein a live scorpion to wake up the idol. *Elliot I. Osgood,* in *Breaking Down Chinese Walls.*

33. *Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering.* Elijah took great pains to prevent any suspicion that there was fire concealed beneath the altar. An ancient writer under the name of Chrysostom, quoted by Calmet, says: I speak as an eye-witness. In the altars of the idols, there are beneath the altar channels, and underneath a concealed pit; the deceivers enter these, and blow up a fire from beneath upon the altar, by which many are deceived and believe that the fire comes from heaven. In such deception ancient priests seem to have been adepts. At Pompeii a secret staircase has been disclosed from which pipes led to the back of the head of Isis; through these pipes the priests uttered her oracles.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Three years have passed since Elijah told Ahab that there should be no rain in his kingdom till he said the word, and the famine had been severe in Samaria. At last Ahab called Obadiah, his superintendent, and told him to go in one direction while he went in the other in search of fountains of water for their perishing horses and mules. To Elijah had come God's promise of rain, and the call to go and face the angry king. He met Obadiah, who recognized him at once and called him "my lord Elijah." When Elijah bade him tell Ahab that Elijah was there, Obadiah shrank from the task in terror. The king had sought everywhere for Elijah, and should he, Obadiah, tell the king that he had found Elijah and then Elijah would disappear again? His own life would pay the forfeit. All this Obadiah told Elijah, and added: It was I who hid one hundred prophets of God in a cave and fed them when Jezebel had ordered them slain: and now you bid me go and tell Ahab that you are here and he will slay me!" But when Elijah assured him that he would not disappear, Obadiah carried out his command. Ahab came to meet Elijah, and here our lesson takes up the story.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Mount Carmel is a long ridge 1,700 feet high whose western end is a bold promontory, 550 feet, projecting into the Mediterranean Sea. Its name means "the Garden," for it is "the first of Israel's hills to meet the rains, and they give it their best:" most of the hill in ancient times was cultivated. A series of rocky terraces lead down to the Plain of Esdrælon, where Elijah and Obadiah probably met, which extends eastward to the Jordan, threaded at the time of our lesson by the white sandy riverbed of the then waterless Kishon. Mount Carmel is one of the distinctive features of Palestine, but its fame rests upon the story of the great contest fought upon it between Elijah, the prophet of Jehovah, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal.

The whole mountain is now called Mar Elias, the Mountain of Elijah. Tradition points out the place at the southeastern extremity of the ridge, and also declares a cave toward the sea, beneath a great Carmelite Monastery, The Deir-el Mar Elijas, to have been the home of the stern prophet of reform.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

A mother had an only child who was feeble-minded. He was not bright like most boys and girls, and could not be taught anything. For twenty years that mother had cared for him as though he were a baby, for he was no wiser than a little babe. "Oh, if he would only know me, if he would only show once that he knows I am his mother," she often said with tears. Tell your pupils about this mother, and then tell them that God had been caring for the people of Israel for many, many years, and yet they now showed no signs that they knew Him. Recall the golden calves of Jeroboam and the idol worship that followed, and tell them that through Elijah God would call the people back to Him, make them see that He was their Father. Recall this mother when you come in your story to Elijah's prayer: Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art God, and that Thou has turned their heart back again.

The lesson is crowded with dramatic scenes and your task of making it vivid to your pupils is an easy one. Review Elijah's words to Ahab and God's subsequent care of Elijah (last lesson.) Describe the condition of the country, grass burnt, wells and brooks dried up, people hungry, horses perishing. God told Elijah to return to his own country and meet Ahab, for He would now send rain. Omit the meeting with Obadiah, for you will need all your time to give details and make the scene on Carmel vivid. Tell the angry king's words, Elijah's answer, and the king's unwilling obedience to his command. Draw an altar on one side of your blackboard, placing beside it a small E. for Elijah and a large G. for God. On the other side of the blackboard outline another altar, and make many marks around it for Ahab and the prophets of Baal. Your story should include all the remainder of chapter 18.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Sketch on the blackboard the map given on p. 91 and let your pupils copy your work on their pads. (Preliminary practice will enable most teachers to do this rapidly. If you cannot, have one of your pupils come prepared to do this for you. Ask the pupil to whom you gave the clipping (No. 2 of assigned work, p. 97) to describe Mount Carmel. Rapidly recall by questions the situation in the Northern Kingdom; the beginning and growth of idolatry, the crisis, appearance of Elijah, his prophecy, flight to Cherith, stay in Zarephath, and the reason for his again appearing in his own country. Ask the pupil to whom this question was especially assigned, to describe Elijah's meeting with Obadiah and its result. Then ask another pupil to tell about the meeting between Elijah and Ahab. Point out Jezreel on the map. The scene on Mount Carmel is one of the greatest in history: make it real to your pupils.

For Older Pupils. Great is the power of the spectacular and unusual! Thousands may perish from cholera in Egypt or famine in India, and a few lines in the newspapers announcing the fact will be read almost without a thought of what the fact means, but let Mount Pelee wipe out the city of St. Pierre or the earthquake destroy the city of San Francisco, and newspapers the world over are filled with the account, and all peoples stand appalled.

In all the annals of history there is no more spectacular scene than that enacted on Mount Carmel in the days of Ahab and Elijah, and familiar as it may be to us all, we can profitably recall it and learn its lesson.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Elijah and Lincoln

Two Champions of Righteousness. Elijah is one of the world's greatest reformers. He was the champion of single-heartness, while Ahab was the

campion of compromise. Ahab thought to serve both God and Baal; Elijah knew that he must serve either God or Baal. From the ventage ground of later history we see how tremendous was Elijah's task, how imimnent was the danger that the true religion would utterly perish in Israel, how frought with endless consequences was his pioneer work in starting the chosen people towards freedom from degrading idolatry and facing them toward the great goal of that spiritual religion that was revealed to them in Jesus Christ.

To-day is the birthday of that great American whose deeds, had he lived, in the days of Ahab, would surely have been chronicled in the Book of Kings among those of the prophets. In some respects we could not find a greater contrast than between Elijah and Lincoln: the one stern and cruel, the other gentle and merciful; but brave, true, patriotic, unselfish, earnest, devout, are adjectives that apply alike to both. The sweet, simple nature of Lincoln was just as courageous in a time of crisis as was the grand, austere nature of Elijah, and just as truly as Elijah did he shape the destiny of a great people, relying as implicitly upon the help of Him who makes history. These words in which Lincoln closed an address are the key of his whole life: Let us have faith that right makes might, and, in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it. It was right that made might with Elijah, and in that faith he dared to do his duty as he understood it. It is a fortunate accident that the greatest event in the life of Elijah is our story on this day when we commemorate the birth of our great president.

Memorable Words of Abraham Lincoln. Having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.

Fellow citizens, *we* cannot escape history.

The purposes of the Almighty are perfect and must prevail.

Let no one falter who thinks he is right.

Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result.

I have felt His hand upon me in great trials, and submitted to His guidance, and I trust that as He shall further open the way I will be ready to walk therein, relying on His help and trusting in His goodness.

II The Great Choice

How Long go ye Limping between Two Sides. Thus Elijah questioned the people: they were like a man who could not walk straight, but went first to one side and then to the other. Our modern popular expression would be, How long are you going to sit on the fence? You must choose: which side will you join, God's or Baal's? It was not a question of choice between two gods of equal power, Elijah showed the people, and when they were convinced that God alone had power, they cried out: The Lord He is God, the Lord, He is God. The metaphysician tells us that if a hungry ass found itself between a couple of trusses of hay equally attractive the perplexed animal would hesitate until it perished of hunger, Dr. Watkinson reminds us, but, he continues, that is not our situation. We are not called to judge between two things exactly alike or much alike, but between two most unlike things in the universe—between the poor, unsatisfying life of self and the discipleship of Christ, rich in peace and power, in blessing and hope.

And the People answered him not a Word. When duly examined the pretexts of indecision are absurd; unless we submit to the great appeal, nothing is left but speechlessness. What are the undecided ones waiting for? Some are stopped by a variety of presuppositions. Much mystery and many questions must be cleared up. There are difficulties with regard to the Bible: the great question of Noah's ark, of Baalam's ass, of the Gadarene swine. How shall we reconcile sin, suffering, and death, with the goodness of God? Are not the birth and death of Christ wrapped in mystery? Now, it is true that revelation presents great problems; but does this justify our hesitation? Spots appear on the sun, yet it gives more light than any other luminary, therefore we rejoice to walk in its light; and although dark places occur in revelation, it is still "the master-light of all our seeing," and our common sense bids us follow its guidance. We have to judge between Christ and other masters,

and there need not be one moment's hesitation between the glorious liberty, the godly comfort, the high character, the sweet service, the benign influence, the splendid hope of the Christian life and the life of sin.

Many wait for a more powerful impulse. Waiting for something practically supernatural that will agitate, stimulate, or master them; but really the appeal of conscience is not less the voice of God than the vision that smote Saul.

Others wait for a convenient season. "Convenient" is a word that has no place in serious life. When seriously ill, we do not defer sending for the doctor until it is convenient. How much rather, then, shall we promptly deal with the crisis of the soul! Condensed from a chapter in *The Education of the Heart* by *W. L. Watkinson.*

The Day of Decision. It was a day in spring, a Saturday, and the mill-hands in the New England village stopped work at noon. Forth from the stocking mill where he labored came Charley Jordan, happy to be out in the spring air with a half-holiday at his disposal. His heart was light, and the world was fair, and he and care were strangers. Half-way down the street he met his Sunday-school teacher, who stopped him for a moment, spoke pleasantly of the fine spring weather, asked him a question about his work, inquired if he would be in Sunday-school next day, and passed on. Then, wavering a moment in her own mind, she turned with a sudden impulse and faced him again.

"Charley," she asked, "don't you think it is time for you to take a stand for the best things—I mean, you know, the things of the Christian life?"

He had heard sermons all his life, and was not unmoved by them, but this simple, direct word of his teacher touched a sudden chord in his heart. He was fifteen, more than two-thirds of twenty-one. Life was pleasant to look forward too; the thing he was asked to do was a pleasant and beautiful one. He thought a moment, and then said:

"Yes, Mrs. Beale, I think it is time. I will do it."

He went to his home as he had often gone before, and yet not the same. He had made a great decision, and had something to live up to. He had always been a clean boy and a thoughtful boy. He had few bad habits to unlearn or serious faults to forsake. What had he promised to do, and how was he to go about it, and what did it all amount to, anyway?

As to his outer conduct, it was not greatly different from before. But more resolutely he sought association with the better things about him. New and large aspirations took possession of him, and found new impulse from within. He drew better books from the library and sought the fellowship of the best young people.

He is still a young man, relatively speaking; but he has reached a position of influence and usefulness second to that of no man in the city where he now resides. Very recently, to a close friend, he told the story of his early struggles, and came back again and again to the moment when, a care-free boy, whistling his way home from the factory, he paused to meet the simple question of his Sunday-school teacher, a question she had asked with fluttering heart, and almost forbore to ask at all.

"It was the very opportune moment," said he, "and although I was in no serious danger of going to the bad, it kindled within me a new aspiration, born of a new ideal." *Youth's Companion.*

III Missionary Topics The Only True God

Heathen Idols Contrasted with the Lord. Read the 115th Psalm.

A Test between the Lord and Pele. The native people of the Hawaiian Islands had a dread goddess whom they called Pele. She dwelt in the fiery part of the volcano Kilauea, and her power was great and terrible. The princess Kapiolani arranged a test, that she might prove to her people that Pele was powerless. She made a pilgrimage of a hundred miles, most of the way on foot, to the great crater where she was met by a missionary who had walked barefoot, for he had no shoes, from Hilo, twenty-five miles away. The two then descended from the rim to the "black rock." There they were in full view of about eighty watching natives, and Kapiolani said to them:

"The Lord is my God. He kindled these fires. I fear not Pele. If I perish from the anger of Pele, you may fear the power of Pele. If I do not perish, all the gods of Hawaii are vain." The terrified people expected to see the fire leap upon her for thus defying their goddess, but she stood calmly there, sang a hymn of praise, and then returned unharmed to them. Her test did much to convince the Hawaiians that their gods were vain, and that "The Lord, He is God," even as Elijah's test convinced the people of Israel.

Heathenism has no True Prayer. What a contrast between the wild monotonously repeated cry of the Baal-worshippers and the true, fervent prayer of Elijah! In some respects Elijah's prayer is a model one: it is calmly confident, conscious of his personal relationship to God as his servant, desirous only of God's glory, and asks a blessing for others, beseeching God that the people may be led to know Him, and turn their hearts to Him. In all heathenism no such prayer is ever offered. "Wild cries and passionate desires, flung upward to an unloved god, are not prayers; and that solace and anchor of the troubled soul is wanting in all the dreary lands given up to idolatry."

Missionaries ask the worshippers before the great Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Burma, "Are you praying to Gautama, or the pagoda?" and receive the answer, "I am praying to no one." "Then what are you praying for?" "For nothing, but I hope in some way, I know not how, to get benefit."

SENTENCE SERMONS

I claim the right of knowing whom I serve. *O. W. Holmes.*

One man with God at his back, who fears nothing, can work marvels. *Alexander Maclaren.*

A false face, a false character, a false credit, a false religion, will always prove valueless in the day of testing and scrutiny. *David Gregg.*

Our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12.29.

And it shall come to pass that, before ye call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isa. 65.24.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Before whom I stand, whose servant I am—these were the thoughts that nerved Elijah to his great task: the same thoughts will nerve us for any crisis.

It was not till after Elijah prayed that the fire of the Lord fell. "O God, stand by me against all the wisdom of the world," Luther prayer in agony that memorable night in April, 1521. "Thou alone canst. The cause is Thine, not mine. I rely upon no man, that were useless; everything human fails. O God, dost Thou not hear? My God, art Thou dead? No, Thou canst not die, Thou art only hidden from me. Thou hast chosen me for this cause. Stand Thou by me in the name of Thy Son Jesus Christ, who is my Protector, my Shield and my Strong Tower." Thus Luther wrestled with God in prayer all that long night, and the next morning calm and firm in strength received from God, he was able to face the Emperor and the realm. Why are we ever weak and helpless when that same strength may be ours?

"Life is a service: whom will you serve?" You can choose whom you will serve, but you cannot choose not to choose. You are choosing either self or God. Which?

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. Elijah meets Obadiah, 1-5.
II. Elijah meets Ahab, 16-19.
III. Elijah and the people, 20-24.
IV. The contest, 25-39.
V. Slaying of prophets, 40.
VI. End of the drought, 41-46.

"Thou troubler of Israel" was Ahab's angry greeting to Elijah when they met. Boldly Elijah returned the remark and told the king plainly that he was the real troubler of the nation, for he had forsaken the commandments of the Lord and had followed the gods of Jezebel, his heathen wife, and then Elijah ordered the King to assemble on Mount Carmel the priests of Baal and of the Asherah. The king did the prophets' bidding.

The people assembled on Mount Carmel and Elijah sternly said to them: "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." They had no word to answer. "I am the only prophet of Jehovah left," continued Elijah, "and there are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. We will have a test. Let them bring two bullocks, and let them prepare one for sacrifice and I will prepare the other; then call on your god and I will call on Jehovah and the God that answers by fire, let him be God." The people approved.

The priests of Baal did as Elijah said, and from morning till noon they cried, "O Baal, hear us," and leaped about the altar, but there was no answer. At noon Elijah mocked them: "Cry aloud," he said, "perhaps your god is meditating, or has gone on a journey, or is asleep." Frantically they kept up their fruitless scream, and gashed themselves with knives until the time of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice, nor any that regarded.

Then Elijah called the people to him where he stood, the one against the many. Quietly he made his preparations. He repaired the altar; taking twelve stones he built it up, made a trench around it, piled on the wood and then laid upon it the slain bullock. Three times he had four jars of water poured upon the offering, till the trenches were filled. And then he called upon the Lord: "O let it be known this day," he cried, "that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, that this people may know that Thou art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then fell the fire of the Lord and consumed offering and wood and stones and water. And the people fell on their faces crying, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."

The prophets of Baal were taken down to the Brook Kishon and slain. Elijah made Ahab eat and drink, for rain was coming, the long drought was soon to be ended. He ascended Mount Carmel and prayed, bidding his servant look towards the sea whence the rain would come. At last the servant reported a small cloud, the size of a man's hand. "Go and tell Ahab to make haste to get back to Jezreel, for the rain is coming," he commanded the servant. The heavens grew black with clouds and wind, the longed-for rain came in torrents. In great exultation Elijah girded up his mantle and ran before Ahab's chariot across the plains even to Jezreel.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. God's champions against wrong. 2. The power which a man with absolute faith in the right of his own convictions has over others.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What had happened at the close of the great contest on Mt. Carmel? (1 K. 18.40-46.) 2. What effect did Ahab's report have on Jezebel? 3. What earlier deed of Jezebel's gave Elijah cause to fear her wrath? (1 K. 18.3.) 4. Where was Beersheba? 5. What can you tell about the juniper tree? (Clipping, p. 109.) 6. When was Moses in despair? (Num. 11.10-17.) 7. Read Ps. 55.1-6, which well expresses Elijah's feeling. 8. Describe Mount Horeb. (Clipping, p. 109.) 9. What great hero had led the Isralites to Horeb? 10. Read Ex. 19 and 20. 11. What other strong characters in the Bible show the need of the warning: Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall? (Clipping, Roberston, p. 108.) 12. How was Elijah convinced that God's cause should not fail? (15-18.)

Questions to think about. 1.What must Elijah have expected after his victory on Carmel? 2. Why did Jezebel send her message? 3. Was it cowardly in Elijah to flee? 4. What reasons can you give for his despair? 5. Is it ever right to long for death? 6. Do you approve of Elijah's answer to the question, What doest thou here? 7. What does *jealousy for* another mean? (Clipping, p. 107.) 8. What does the contrast between the wind and earthquake and fire on the one hand, and the still small voice on the other, teach?

Note-Book Work. 1. In your Book of the Prophets write Scene II in Elijah's Life, The Interview between Elijah and Obadiah. 2. Scene III, The Interview between Elijah and Ahab. 3. Scene IV, Contest on Mount Carmel.

LESSON VIII—FEBRUARY 19

ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN

Golden Text

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Isaiah 40.31.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1. Kings 18.41-46. Elijah Running before Ahab. **T.** 1 Kings 10.1-8. Elijah under the Juniper Tree. **W.** 1 Kings 10.9-14. The Lord in the Still, Small Voice. **T.** 1 Kings 19.15-21. Message and New Ministrant. **F.** Num. 11.1-15. The Despairing Appeal of Moses. **S.** Ps. 73.1-28. "My Flesh and my Heart Faileth," **S.** Ps. 38.1-22. My Groaning is not Hid from Thee. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 18.41-19.21 PRINT 19.1-16 COMMIT vv. 11-13

1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. 3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 5 And he lay down and slept under a juniper-tree, and behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6 And he looked, and, behold, there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7 And the angel of Jehovah came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. 8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: 12 and after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 14 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *How he had slain all the prophets.* The prophets of Baal, 1 K. 18.40.

2. *So let the gods do to me, and more so.* If I do not kill you as you have killed the prophets of Baal, then let the gods kill me. For her purpose in giving the warning, see the Historical Background.

3. *When he saw that.* When he saw how matters stood. He had doubtless expected that after the victory on Carmel Ahab would overthrow the worship of Baal, but he now learns that Jezebel's power over him and influence in the kingdom will be undiminished.—*Went for his life.* Went to save his life. "Elijah's character resembled that of Peter, who first struck a blow in defense of his Master, and then denied him" (*Dummelow*).—*Which belonged to Judah.* And therefore was beyond the domain of Ahab and Jezebel.—*His servant.* Jewish tradition says this servant was the son of the widow of Zarephath.

4. *A day's journey.* Probably about twenty miles.—*The wilderness.* The desert of Paran.—*A juniper-tree.* Or, *broom-tree,* RVm. A shrub that grows along the desert wadies.—*He requested for himself that he might die.* Compare the similar request of Moses, Num. 11.13-15; and of Jonah, 4.3-8.—*It is enough.* I can stand no more.

5. *He lay down and slept.* The sleep that comes to one exhausted by sorrow.

6. *Cake baken...cruse of water.* Whether provided by a miracle or by a friend the text does not say.—*Coals.* Or, *hot stones,* RVm.

7. *The journey is too great for thee.* Either the journey from Mount Carmel hither had been too great, or the journey thence to Horeb, v. 8, would be.

8. *Forty days and forty nights.* The time given plainly connects Elijah with Moses, Ex. 34.28. It is about one hundred and fifty miles from Beersheba to Horeb; the journey could have been made in eight or ten days, but time was needed for communion with God.—*The Mount of God.* So called in Ex. 3.1; 4.27, because here God manifested Himself.

9, 10. Repeated in 13, 14.

10. *I have been very jealous for Jehovah.* Our words *jealous* and *zeal* and *yeast* are kindred in origin, and may be traced back to the Greek word which means *boiling.* To be *jealous for* some one is to be burning with zeal for that one's interests. Elijah's entire ministry is marked by his zeal for God.—*I, even I, only, am left.* See v. 18 and the words of Paul in Rom. 11.2-5.

11. *Behold, Jehovah passed by.* In the symbols of His power. Compare the Theophany of Ex. 33.18-23; 34.5-6.—*Jehovah was not in the wind, not in the earthquake.* The lesson Elijah was thus taught was that when great contests had failed of result, gentle and long-continued means would prevail: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts, Zech. 4.6. Storm and earthquake and lightning might have been expressly sent at this time by God as revelations to Elijah of Himself; or the natural coming of these forces might have set the prophet to thinking about God's ways of working, and thus it was by divine suggestion that God worked.

12. *A still small voice.* Hebrew, *a sound of gentle stillness,* RVm. Compare Job 4.16, There was silence, and I heard a voice.

13. *He wrapped his face in his mantle.* So Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God, Ex. 3.6, and in Ex. 33.20 we read "Man shall not see me and live."

15. The voice answered Elijah's "I only": God has other helpers besides Elijah.—*On thy way.* Back to the Kingdom of Israel.—*To the wilderness of.* Or, *by the wilderness to,* RVm.—*Thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.* Hazael was the general of Ben-hadad, who was then king of Syria. See 2 K. 8.7-15.

16. *Jehu the son of Nimshi.* He was the son of Jehoshaphat, the grandson of Nimshi, 2 K. 9.2, an officer at this time in Ahab's army.—*Shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel.* See 2 K. 9.1-6. Elijah did not himself anoint Jehu, nor are we told that he anointed Hazael; directly or indirectly he caused them to be anointed. Through Hazael, 2 K. 10.32 and Jehu, 2 K. 9 and 10 God was to execute judgment on the house of Ahab: "Jehu was a scourge of the Lord to the people, and Hazael also generously afflicted Israel."—*Elisha shalt thou anoint.* Vv. 19-21.—*To be prophet in thy room.* Elijah had thought himself

necessary to the work of reformation; he learns that God buries the workmen, but the work goes on," and that it would take time to abolish idolatry, he could not expect the work to be accomplished in his lifetime.

17. *The sword of Hazael.* 2 K. 8.12; 13.3, *22.—Shall Jehu slay.* 2 K. 9.14-10. 25.—*Shall Elisha slay.* "This clause is enigmatical. Elisha can hardly be said to have slain any. He lived, on the whole, in friendship with the kings both of Israel and of Aram, and in peace and honor in the cities. But the general idea seems to be that he would carry on the mission of Elijah alike for the guidance and the heaven-directed punishments of kings and nations, and that the famines, raids, and humiliations which rendered his nation miserable under the sons of Ahab should be elements of his sacred mission" *(Farrar).*

18. *Seven thousand.* A round number: Elijah was not the only worshipper of God. There are usually more good people than one may think.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

4. *It is enough.* It has been observed of the holy men of Scripture that their most signal failures took place in those points of character for which they were remarkable in excellence. Moses was the meekest of men, but it was Moses who "Spake unadvisedly with his lips." St. John was the apostle of charity; yet he is the very type to us of religious intolerance, in his desire to call down fire from heaven. St. Peter is proverbially the apostle of impetuous intrepidity, yet twice he proved a craven. If there were anything for which Elijah is remarkable, we should say it was superiority to human weakness. Like John the Baptist, he dared to arraign and rebuke his sovereign: like the commander who cuts down the bridge behind him, leaving himself no alternative but death or victory, he taunted his adversaries, the priests of Baal, on Mount Carmel, making them gnash their teeth and cut themselves with knives, but at the same time insuring for himself a terrible end, in case of failure, from his exasperated foes. And again, in his last hour, when he was on his way to a strange and unprecedented departure from this world—when the whirlwind and flame and chariot were ready—he asked for no human companionship. In harmony with the rest of his lonely, severe character, he desired to meet his Creator alone. Now it was this man—so stern, so iron, so independent, so above all human weakness—of whom it was recorded that in his trial-hour he gave way to a fit of petulance and querulous despondency to which there is scarcely found a parallel. *Frederick W. Robertson,* in *Sermons.*

4. *I am not better than my fathers.* The juniper-tree was the cross on which he died to self-admiration, self-confidence, self-righteousness; and henceforth he knew that power, courage and victory were not in himself, but in the Lord God before whom he stood. That is the lesson we all need to learn. We are not fit for exaltation until we have passed through this humiliation,—this innermost, uttermost self-renunciation. God must teach us this; and happy are they who die to self that they may live unto Him. Let us be humbled to the dust, and yet not despair even then. The juniper-tree is all very well, but we must not hang ourselves upon it. *W. L. Watkinson,* in *Studies in Christian Character.*

14. *I, even I only, am left.* There have been times in the history of man when it has seemed as though the whole world has been given over to darkness; but it has never really been so. The light of God has ever been shining. Elijah said in the agony of his disappointed spirit, "I, even I only, am left," and God said to him, "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." Thus in every successive age, when it has seemed for a while as though God were beaten out of His own world, and black and impenetrable darkness had completely overpowered the light, that has only been the false vision of men and women who have not been able to enclose the divine horizon at one glance. Somehow or other, although it may not have been discernible to the ordinary vision, the light has still been burning. *G. Campbell Morgan,* in *Wherein Have We Robbed God?*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

2. *So let the gods do to me, and more so.* Among the Hebrews it was some-

times customary to slay an animal when a formal oath was taken, and the words then repeated, "The Lord do so to me," meant that the one uttering them asked to have the same fate as the victim if he failed to keep his oath.

4. *A juniper-tree.* This is a species of broom called *Retama roetam* by modern botanists, a shrub that is occasionally found in the wilderness of Judah and is quite abundant in the region of the Dead Sea and in the Sinaitic peninsula. It attains a height of ten or twelve feet. Besides affording shade it is used for fuel (Ps. 120.4), and its roots can be eaten (Job 30.3, 4). Dr. Robinson in writing about his travels says: Our Arabs always selected the place of encampment in a spot where the juniper-tree grew, in order to be sheltered by it at night from the wind, and when they went on during the day in advance of our camels, we generally found them sitting or sleeping under the bush as a protection from the sun.

6. *A cake baken on the coals.* Dough was baked by being placed on a stone and covered with hot ashes.

18. *Every mouth that hath not kissed him.* So kissing the image of Baal was an act of worship (1 K. 19.18), much as Romanists now kiss the Pope's toe or the toe of the bronze image of Jupiter which does duty for St. Peter in the church of St. Peter's at Rome, to signify his superiority over any temporal sovereign whose hand is kissed. *H. B. Tristram,* in *Eastern Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Our history of Elijah continues without a break between the last lesson and this, and gives us an insight into the prophet's inner life, showing us that this man, usually so firm and undaunted, has his moments of weakness like all human beings.

From Jezreel (see map), in Samaria, Elijah went to Beersheba on the southern frontier of the kingdom of Judah, which was a sanctuary as late as the eighth century, Amos 5.5. It is on the border of the desert and is noted for its wells. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had made their home here.

Beersheba was on the great road between Canaan and Egypt. A day's journey brought Elijah through the Negeb, or the South Land, to the wilderness of Paran, where he rested and then continued his journey to Horeb. Horeb is the general name given to the group of mountains in the southern part of the Sinaitic peninsula which includes solemn Mount Sinai. "Here in the heart of nature's profoundest solitude, amid scenery unsurpassed for wild and stern grandeur, history, tradition, and geography have combined to locate Sinai, the Mount of the Lord, and all those wondrous events enacted round it." Here on the cloud-enshrouded mountain Moses had communed with God, and from here he had proclaimed the law to the Israelites below.

Peninsula of Sinai

Jebel Musa (The Mount of Moses) rises precipitously to a height of 7,363 feet. From the Monastery of St. Catherine on its northern slope three thousand stone steps, which were cut thirteen hundred years ago for the use of pilgrims, lead to the summit. Four hundred feet from the summit is the Chapel of Elijah, "where," writes Dr. E. W. Bishop, "there is a kind of hollow amphitheatre, and it requires no stretch of the imagination to see the weary prophet taking refuge under the superincumbent rocks while all the fury of a mountain thunder storm played round him; and then as it passed by, hushing itself, as a thunder storm always hushes itself, into a vast silence thrice accentuated in that desolate spot, one can see the old hero emerging from under the dripping rocks and listening to the still small voice."

The wilderness of Damascus, v. 15, is the Syrian desert in which Damascus is situated. A few miles from Damascus a synagogue marks the spot where according to tradition Elijah anointed Elisha. Abel-Meholah, whence Elisha came, was in the Jordan plain perhaps ten miles south of Bethshan.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Elijah is utterly discouraged. Do you perhaps think, that, aside from the

graphic interest of the story, there is no special message here for your pupils, for they can know nothing about despair? Stop and recall your own childhood; does there not come to your mind many a moment when your heart seemed breaking, many a tragedy when you thought the sun would never shine again? There is a vivid picture in my mind of a five-year-old lad whom I once found under his juniper-tree. Things had all gone wrong, he had "Nothing to do and nothing to do it with," and in his utter discouragement he had hidden himself away and between his sobs was saying: "Winthrop's very sorry for himself, he is; he's very sorry for himself." Very young children have committed suicide, so complete has been their despair. Help your children to free themselves from this happiness-destroying demon. Tell them the story of the boy on the canal path, p. 112, and after telling them something about Helen Keller as a little girl who could neither see nor hear nor talk, tell in your own words what she said in her autobiography, p. 113. Teach this truth of Browning's: How soon a smile of God can change the world!

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Last week we left Elijah exultant, triumphant, unconscious of fatigue as he raced before Ahab's chariot to Jezreel. Had he not won the battle for the Lord, had not Jehovah been proved mighty and Baal powerless, had not the Baal worship been overthrown as the people shouted "Jehovah, He is God!" had not the Baal prophets been put to death, without a remonstrance from the cowed king, and had not God sent the rain? But Elijah had not reckoned on Jezebel. Her message came. What was it? Why did she send it? Surely she did not wish to give her victim fair play by forewarning him, for a tigress, as Dr. Maclaren comments, does not give warning of her spring. Perhaps her rage was so great that she simply had to give expression to it in some way at once, and she sent the message without stopping to consider its probable effect. Perhaps she feared the people after all, and in view of their acknowledgment of Jehovah did not dare risk taking Elijah's life at this time, and therefore took this means to put him to flight. Elijah could not brave her fury.

For Older Pupils. "How willingly would I exchange places to-day with the soldiers who sleep on the ground in the Army of the Potomac!" wrote President Lincoln to Mr. Schuyler Colfax, upon receiving bad news from the army. Lincoln's heart was wrapped up in the cause he was championing, and the outlook was most discouraging.

There has only been one Man in all the world's history to whom applied Isaiah's words—He will not fail nor be discouraged till He have set justice in the earth. If ever there was one who seemingly had reason for abject despair it was Jesus the Christ, but His spirit knew not despair. Elijah was one of the great men of the world's history, but he was very human. Between Elijah on Carmel and Elijah on Horeb there is a vast contrast: the mood of the man on Horeb is the one which every heart can understand.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Slough of Despond

The Reasons for Elijah's Mood. Bunyan spent several months in the Slough of Despond. Is there any pilgrim who wholly misses it? Who is entirely free from seasons of disheartenment? Under the juniper-tree we all sit at one time or another with Elijah. We may have many reasons for dejection—we may have none, but though it be only a haunting feeling that "resembles sorrow only as the mist resembles rain," it can paralyze action.

Many causes united to throw Elijah into the depths of despair. There was the reaction that inevitably follows moments of great exaltation. "The height of the crest of one wave measures the depth of the trough of the next." Reaction is bound to follow. It is only Jesus Christ who can stand on the Mount of Transfiguration, His face shining from the inner light and the words of God's approval ringing in His ears, and the next moment can be at the service of the afflicted in the valley below, unaffected by the descent.

Elijah's nerves were overwrought, his physical nature at a low ebb. The

fifteen mile run to Jezreel ahead of Ahab's chariot had doubtless exhausted him. The close connection between body and mind is a commonplace thought these days, mental therapeutics are studied as never before, and the cure of the body by means of the cure of the mind has become a well-known scientific study. Not so often is the other side dwelt upon, the cure of the mind by means of the cure of the body. What seems spiritual loss may be rather bodily fatigue and exhaustion. Spurgeon confessed that with him exhaustion of body meant exhaustion of soul. There is many a Carlyle whose pessimism proceeds from his dyspepsia, many an Elijah whose dejection dates from his strenuous race to Jezreel. Wilful neglect of the laws of health is a sin usually punished by the diminished health of the spirit.

Elijah's life had been a lonely one. Alone he had stood on Mount Carmel, the only active champion of Jehovah, and now he lay down alone under the juniper-tree and prayed that he might die. Even the mighty spirit of Jesus craved companionship. No human spirit is so erect and strong that it can forge ahead without human companionship and sympathy and not sometimes lose heart.

Then, too, Elijah went from a period of intense, exciting activity, to one of complete idleness. The most despondent people are usually those who stand all day idle in the market place. Mr. George Clarke Peck, in "Old Sins in New Clothes," recalls a college mate who entered college merely to pass away his four superfluous years, because he had more time and money than he knew how to spend. His classmates all envied him his prospects, nothing to do but to read, travel, and enjoy life! But the first heard about him after graduation was that he had grown so tired of having nothing to do that he had put a bullet through his brain to end the ennui.

The strongest of the reasons for Elijah's discouragement lay in his zeal for the Lord. In his expectations which he had thought fulfilled on Carmel he was bitterly disappointed. He had thought the battle won for God until Jezebel's message came. Then he knew that king and people would yield to her will. He knew her power. His victory was but a defeat. God's cause would never prosper in Jezebel's day. He had labored all in vain.

"O it is hard to work for God,
To rise and take His part
Upon this battle-field of earth,
And not sometimes lose heart."

And with the thought of the defeated cause came the loss of confidence in himself as the champion of that cause. "In all battles," said Napoleon, "the time comes when the bravest soldiers, after having made the greatest efforts, feel disposed to run away. This terror is caused by a want of confidence in their courage; it requires only the slightest cause to restore to them their courage; the great art is to produce it." Napoleon was a master of this art, his mere presence always rallied his troops and restored their confidence in their courage. Elijah had lost this confidence in himself. "I am not better than my fathers," he cried, "take away my life." And then he was made aware of the divine Presence and his confidence came back, he went bravely forth to carry out his commission, and we do not hear of his faltering again.

II The Way Out

Lessons from God's Treatment of Elijah. First of all Elijah's exhausted vitality was restored. He slept, awoke, and ate, and went in the strength of the food a forty days' journey. "In other words, like a wise physician, God administers food, rest, and exercise, and then, and not till then, proceeds to expostulate; for before, Elijah's mind was unfit for reasoning." If when we are physically exhausted we stop and take the needed rest, we shall often find that meanwhile the demon of discouragement has taken leave. A book has just been published entitled "Health for Christian Workers." It rightly maintains that to guard the body from pernicious influences and to obey the laws of health are religious duties of the Christian worker.

There were steps across the Slough of Despond in Bunyan's allegory; they were the promises. One of the best of the promises is the one which closes

Matthew's Gospel: Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Tennyson tells us of the prayers of Enoch Arden on his lonely island, and says:

Had not his poor heart
Spoken with that which being everywhere
Lets none who speak with Him seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.

Elijah might have died of solitude in the wilderness had not God spoken to him. There is no lonely one who may not have the same companionship. I am not alone, for the Father is with Me, said our Elder Brother.

What doest thou here, Elijah? was the question that reached him, and he knew that he was complaining, not doing. Go, return on thy way, and anoint Hazael and Jehu and Elisha. Lie on earth supine no longer, you are in this world for a purpose, there is a special work for you to do; do it and forget self and all your discouragements in its doing. "What doest thou here? Go." These are words for all discouraged ones. Get to work, do something for others, fill your mind and heart so full of work for others that there is no room for your own discouragements.

There is wise philosophy in the humble washerwoman's words, who when being pitied for having added the care of her sister's large family to that of her own, replied: "Yes'm, but don't ye think plenty of folks sometimes crowd out things that's worse? Ye don't have no time to set down an' think about yer aches an' pains when there's a lot of children wantin' somethin' every minute in the day; an' ye don't git no chance to be by yourself long enough to worry about a lot of things that maybe would bother ye. Ye just have to do the best ye can as they come along. Sometime I think a lot of folks around ye a blessin'." Forgetting self in others is the sovereign way to forget the things that make for despair in your own life.

Much of the discouragement in the lives of workers lies in their thinking like Elijah that all depends upon them alone. God taught Elijah that he had more than one who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and that His work was to be continued by Elisha. Elijah was responsible for his effort, but not for its result. Results are in God's keeping.

A Discouraged Missionary. William Duncan, the brave missionary, founder of New Metlakahtla, Alaska, was often so weary, bodily and mentally, and so discouraged in his work, that when he lay down to rest it was with the prayer that God would not let him see another day, but would take him to Himself while sleeping. But one night he had a glad surprise, and that prayer was not repeated. He had gone on a canoe trip to carry the Gospel to other Indians and his pilot was an old man whom he had chosen because he thought that if the man should attack him, he could overpower him. As Mr. Duncan looked out that night from his tent to see that everything was well, he saw the old pilot lay down his pipe and reverently raise his eyes to heaven as he uttered this prayer: "Be merciful to me, Jesus!" This was the first indication that his words had borne fruit, and it restored his confidence in himself as God's messenger. To struggle on with the work now was easy, discouragement had fled.

Think of your Blessings. Remember in your hours of discouragement the things that make for encouragement. "Were you ever in your life glum and discontented?" Uncle Henry was asked, according to the New York Times. "Yes; once I was plum down in the mouth," he owned. "But I got cured right off, and I ain't ever had an attack of the blues since then. It was when I was a young man. I had just got a job workin' on the Erie Canal. It was gettin' late in the fall, and I hadn't any shoes to my name and I had to send home every red cent, except what would feed me. I didn't see how I was to get a pair of shoes before winter set in." "Well, that was hard lines," said his questioner. "So I thought," continued Uncle Henry, smiling, "until one day I saw a feller on the street that hadn't any feet. I can't rightly say as I've ever been discontented since then."

If we but applied Uncle Henrys' philosophy, how our fit of "blues" would change! Bear it in mind as you hear these words from the autobiography of Helen Keller: Once I knew the depths where no hope was, and darkness lay

on the face of all things. Then love came and set my soul free. Once I knew only darkness and stillness. Now I know hope and joy. Once I fretted and beat myself against the wall that shut me in. Now I rejoice in the consciousness that I can think, act, and attain heaven. My life was without past or future; death, the pessimist would say, a consummation devoutly to be wished. But a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living. Night fled before the day of thought, and love and joy and hope came up in a passion of obedience to knowledge. Can any one who has escaped such captivity, who has felt the thrill and glory of freedom, be a pessimist?"

III The Still Small Voice

The Voice that Elijah heard. Dean Farrar well reminds us in the "Expositor's Bible" that "Throughout the Scriptures infinite care is taken to preclude every notion that the Most High can be represented in visible form. He manifested Himself at Sinai to the children of Israel, but though the mountain burned with fire, and there were clouds and thick darkness, and the voice of a trumpet speaking long and loud, the people were reminded with the utmost solemnity that 'they saw no manner of similitude,' Dt. 4.12, 15. And in the daring description of Jehovah's visible manifestations of Himself to Moses, when He hid him in that fissure of the rock with the hollow of his hand, Moses only observes, as it were, the fringe and evanishment of His glory, "dark with excessive light."

It was natural that Jehovah should reveal Himself to Elijah under the aspect of those awful elemental forces with which his solitary life had made him familiar. No spot in the world is more suitable for those powers in all their fire and magnificence than the knot of mountains which crowd the Sinaitic peninsula with their entangled cliffs. Travelers have borne witness to the overwhelming violence and majesty of the storms which rush and reverberate through the granite gorge of these everlasting hills. It was in such surroundings that Jehovah spoke to the heart of His servant."

Elijah had thought that God's work was to be accomplished by violent effort, by raging temptests and devastating earthquakes and consuming fires; he learned on Mount Horeb that the hearts of the people were not to be turned to Jehovah by famines and miracles, but by gentler and more lasting means, by the teaching of the prophets who were to continue his work when in Gods' own time he should leave it.

Beautifully has Frederick W. Robertson expressed the way in which Elijah learned the lesson. "Jehovah calmed his stormy mind by the healing influences of Nature. He commanded the hurricane to sweep the sky, and the earthquake to shake the ground, He lighted up the heavens till they were one mass of fire. All this expressed and reflected Elijah's feelings. It was Elijah's stormy self reflected in the moods of the tempest, and giving them their character.

Then came a calmer hour. Elijah rose in reverence—felt tenderer sensations in his bosom. He opened his heart to gentler influences, till at last out of the manifold voices of Nature there seemed to speak, not the stormy passions of the man, but the 'still small voice' of the harmony and the peace of God."

The Omnipresent Voice. Jonathan Edwards used to open his windows in a thunder-storm; the atmosphere was so full of God, he said. To-day we begin to realize that God is at work in every blade of grass, as in the earthquake and the thunderbolt, in the commonplaces of life as in the crises; that the laws of nature, being His workmanship, cannot well be the clumsy and ineffective weapon of His will, requiring periodically to be superseded, which men have sometimes supposed; that the supernatural so-called is simply the supernormal, the higher-natural, those perfectly natural self-expressions of the Infinite Spirit which the mind of man, struggling toward the truth, is at yet too dull to understand. *Alexander MacColl,* in *A Working Theology.*

The Voice that all hear. God still speaks to the individual heart in the still small voice. "When God speaks to you, you must not believe that it is the wind blowing or the torrent falling on the hill," warns Bishop Phillips Brooks. "You must gather up the whole power of meeting Him." "God forbid," says

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, "that the babel of earth's voices should drown the accents of the still small voice." We must train our hearts to hear. Have you never heard your name spoken when no other part of a conversation had reached your ear? So you may say,

"Where one heard thunder and one saw flame
I only knew He named my name."

SENTENCE SERMONS

Do not mistake weariness in life for weariness of life.

How soon a smile of God can change the world! *Browning.*

Our seasons of discouragements are but wasted time on the road. *Helen Hunt Jackson.*

Are you going to deny that there is a sun in the heavens because a cloud is passing across your sky? *James Stark.*

Discouragement can never be to the man of faith a permanent condition. *Donald Sage Mackay.*

See through the juniper branches the green immortal palms; go forward in the name and strength of God. *W. L. Watkinson.*

Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance. Ps. 42.5.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts. Zech. 4.6.

In the day of trouble He will keep me secretly in His pavilion:
In the court of His tabernacle will He hide me:
He will lift me up upon the rock. Ps. 27.5.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

If a strong man like Elijah has his moments of weakness and discouragement, we need not wonder that such times come to us. From his experience we may learn how to overcome our weakness. Above all we need to make ours the assurance that we shall not founder in the darkness because the great Pilot is with us.

We may wrong ourselves by counting ourselves failures when it is our physical weakness that warps our mind. On the other hand, we need to guard against excusing ourselves on the ground of nervousness for what in others we would attribute to crossness.

Bishop Patterson could have had almost everything that we count desirable in life, but he sacrificed it all to go to the South Sea Islands to teach the natives how to live. Such a life as he had to live there would cause most people to long for death, but the Bishop wrote in his diary one morning, "I cannot understand how it is God has given me such enormous joy in life." Life is given us to make something of ourselves and to accomplish something for God and our fellow-men, and in service for others the truest joy of living lies.

How can we answer that sharp, searching question, "What doest thou here?" Have we run away from our work, or are we fulfilling the purpose for which we are here in life? "Here's God down on us! What are you about?" questions Mrs. Browning. What can you answer?

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. Elijah's flight to Horeb, 1-8.
II. His communion with God, 9-18.
III. The call of Elisha, 19-21.

From Mount Carmel Ahab returned to Jezreel and told Jezebel all that Elijah had done on the mountain and how he had slain the prophets of Baal. The angry queen dispatched a message to Elijah telling him that the gods might slay her if she did not have him put to death within a day. Elijah fled to Beersheba and then on into the desert. Under the shade of a juniper-tree the

exhausted and discouraged prophet rested, and prayed that he might die, for his life was a failure. As during the famine before this, so now, he received proof that God was caring for him. He awakened from sleep and found bread and water awaiting him. An angel bade him eat. Rested and strengthened by the food he continued his journey to Horeb, the mountain where Moses had communed with God.

While in a cave on the mountain Elijah was made aware of God's "listening ear and sympathizing heart." "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Should he answer that he had run away from Jezebel? Perhaps he had purposed giving up his commission on the mountain that he thought of as especially "the mount of God," for he answered that he had been full of zeal for God, whom the children of Israel had forsaken, and whose prophets had been slain; that he alone was left and that his life was in danger. "Go forth and stand upon the mountain." And the Lord passed by in the symbols of His power—a wind that hurled down the rocks, a mighty earthquake and flashing lightning. But the Lord was in none of these: and then came a still small voice. Reverently Elijah wrapped his mantle about his face, and stood at the entrance of the cave. Again came the question, "What doest thou here?" and again the same answer was given. "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus." You have fled from your work; return to it. Victory in My warfare is attained not by force alone but by long-continued effort and by gentler means. Anoint Hazael king over Syria and Jehu king over Israel and Elisha to be your successor: they shall fulfill My decrees. Think not that you alone have remained true to Me, for there are seven thousand in Israel who have not worshipped Baal."

Elijah departed and found Elisha plowing. He threw over him his mantle, the symbol of his prophetic gift. Elisha knew its meaning, and desired only to bid his father and mother farewell before following the prophet. This request Elijah granted. After slaying the yoke of oxen with which he had been plowing for a farewell feast, Elisha followed Elijah and ministered unto him.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The influence of body over mind and mind over body, and our personal responsibility for the health of each.
2. A hard duty: anointing our successors.
3. The noble army of agitators, verse 17.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Where was Jezreel? (Clipping, p. 118.) 2. Why was Naboth so unwilling to sell the vineyard? (Clipping, p. 117.) 3. How many witnesses to a crime were required by the law of Deuteronomy? (Dt. 19.15.) 4. Had Naboth been guilty of blasphemy, would his death have been legal? (Lev. 24.16.) 5. What was the law as to the place of stoning? (Lev. 24.14.) 6. Which of the ten commandments did Ahab and Jezebel break? Repeat them. (10, 9, 8, 6.) 7. Where are the commandments found? (Ex. 20.) 8. For what did Judas sell himself to do evil? (Mt. 26.15.) 9. For what did Achan? (Josh. 7.21.) 10. How did Ahab meet his death? (1 K. 22.34-38.) 11. How did Jezebel? (2 K. 9.30-37.)

Questions to think about. 1. What did you learn about Ahab's character in lesson IV? In lesson VI? In this lesson? 2. Was Ahab responsible for Jezebel's deed? 3. Did he know about her plan? 4. What should he have done when he learned how she had secured the vineyard? 5. Why was he held guilty of Naboth's death, when he could have said, "Thou canst not say I did it?" 6. Is it ever right to covet anything? 7. How may covetousness be overcome?

Note-Book Work. 1. In your life of Elijah write Scene V, The Slaying of the Prophets of Baal and the End of the Drought. Also scene VI, Elijah's Flight to Horeb, and Scene VII, Elijah calling Elisha. 2. Make a sketch map and locate the places visited by Elijah.

LESSON IX—FEBRUARY 26

ELIJAH MEETS AHAB IN NABOTH'S VINEYARD

Golden Text

Take heed, and beware of covetousness. Lk. 12.15.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings, 21.1-16. The Coveting of a Weak King. **T.** 1 Kings 21-17.29. The King Arraigned by Elijah. **W.** 2 Kings 9.21-37. Elijah's Prophecy Fulfilled. **T.** Josh. 7-10-26. The Coveting of Achan. **F.** 1 Sam. 2.11-25. The Coveting of Eli's Sons. **S.** 2 Kings 5.1-27. The Coveting of Gehazi. **S.** 1 Tim. 6.1-19. The Sin of Covetousness. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 21 PRINT vv. 11-20 COMMIT vv. 17-19

11. And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. 12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. 13 And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him: and the base fellows bare witness against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. 15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead. 16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possesion of it.

17 And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. 19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possesion? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

2. *I will give thee the worth of it in money.* Omri, Ahab's father, had given Shemer, the owner, two talents of silver for the hill of Samaria, I K. 16.24, and David had paid Araunah (Ornan) six hundred shekels of gold for the threshing-floor of Moriah. 1 Ch. 21.22-25.

3. *Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers' unto thee.* The children of Israel shall cleave every one to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. Num. 36.7.

4. *He laid him down upon his bed and would eat not bread.* The bed was perhaps the couch on which he reclined at table.

7. *I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth.* Compare Samuel's prophecy, 1 S. 8.14.

8. *The elders and nobles.* "Ahab is wicked and weak; Jezebel, wicked and strong; the elders, wicked and subservient."—*Maclaren.*

9. *Proclaim a fast.* Fasts were proclaimed to avert calamities that impended because of some crime committed.—*Set Naboth on high among the*

Courtesy of Harper's Bazaar

JEZEBEL

people. Or, *at the head of,* RVm. This must have been, not the place of honor, but the place customarily given the accused at a trial.

10. *Two men.* Two witnesses were necessary, Dt. 19.15. *Thou didst curse God and the king.* Or, *renounce,* RVm. See Ex. 23.28.

11-13 See vv. 9, 10.—*They carried him forth out of the city.* This was according to law, Lev. 24.14.—*And stoned him.* His sons also, 2 K. 9.26: no heirs were left to claim the property.

16. *Go down.* If he was at Samaria at the time, v. 18, it was twenty miles and a descent of a thousand feet to Jezreel.—*To take possesion.* According to the rabbis, the property of one who had cursed the king fell to him by right.

19. *In the place...even thine.* Not literally fulfilled in Ahab's case; see v. 29 and 1 K. 22.37-38; but fulfilled in his son's death, 2 K. 9.24-26.

20. *O mine enemy.* Thou troubler of Israel, 18.17.—*Thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil.* Thou hast sold thyself to no purpose, Septuagint Version.

21. The same expressions are used in 14.10 and 2 K. 9.8.

22. *Like the house of Jeroboam.* 15.29.—*Like the house of Baasha.* 16.3-11.

23. *The dogs shall eat Jezebel.* 2 K. 9.10,30-37.

26. *Amorites.* The heathen inhabitants of Canaan.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

11. *The nobles did as Jezebel had sent unto them.* The deal that Queen Jezebel made with the elders of the city was no more unscrupulous than some of the manœuvers by which the saloon-keepers and lawbreakers have maintained their power over the municipal government in our larger cities. *Wm. R. Richards,* in *For Whom Christ Died.*

13. *Stoned him to death with stones.*

The son of Omri built at Shomeron
A pleasure house with ivory inlaid,
Whereof the fruit, o'er field and vineyard blown
Reached Tyre and Sidon. Cities, too, of stone
Well hewn, he builded. Rain and wind have played
Millennia with their dust. One pile alone
Remains. Though realms have risen and decayed
No shard can vanish of the fragments thrown
On Naboth's mangled corpse at Jezreel's gate.
John Elliot Bowman, in *Sunday-School Times.*

19. *Hast thou killed and also taken possession?* The fiery Tishbite, gaunt and grim, ascetic and solitary, who bearded Ahab, and flamed across a corrupt age with a stern message of repentance or destruction, was repeated in the lonely ascetic who had his Ahab in Herod, and his Jezebel in Herodias, knew no fear, but flashed out the lightnings of his words on every sin. The two men were brothers, and their voices answer each other across the centuries. *Alexander Maclaren,* in the *Book of Matthew.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

8. *Sealed them with his seal.* The seal had on it the name of a special design of the king, and this Jezebel rubbed with ink and stamped upon the letters, making them as authoritative as would his own signature.

Ancient Hebrew Seals

15. *Arise, take possession of the vineyard.* Not only had Jezebel taken the precaution to have Naboth's sons put to death, but having had Naboth sentenced for blasphemy his property probably fell by law to the crown.

15. *The vineyard, which he refused to give thee for money.* Recall the law in Numbers concerning the marriage of heiresses. The tribe of the sons of

Joseph came to Moses and told him that the inheritance of Zelophehad had descended to his daughters, and if they married out of the tribe that inheritance would be taken away from their own tribe. Moses told them that their cause was right and thus decreed: Let them be married to whom they think best; only into the family of the tribe of their father shall they be married. So shall no inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for the children of Israel shall cleave every one to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Orientals have always been unwilling to sell inherited property. When Shemer sold the hill of Samaria to Omri for his capital, we are told that "he called the city which he built after the name of Shemar," and orientalists have thought that this must have been Shemer's condition on which he parted with his inheritance, for thus he retained for himself the "remembrance." The Hindus, according to Dr. Clarke, are just as strongly attached to their homesteads as the Jews. Though the heads of the family be employed in a distant part of the country, and though the homesteads may be almost in ruins, they still cling to the family inheritance with a fondness bordering almost on superstition.

23. *The dogs shall eat Jezebel.* The bodies of poor Hindus, and of persons who have received public punishment, are thrown into the rivers, and floating to the side, are devoured by dogs, vultures, and crows. *Adam Clarke.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapters 19 and 21, and chapters 20 and 22, of First Kings are closely connected in thought, and in the Septuagint chapter 21 is placed after chapter 19. Chapter 20 is our lesson three weeks hence, and postponing till then the consideration of its record of Ahab's two Syrian campaigns, we continue the narrative in which Elijah is prominent. Probably some time has passed since Elijah's visit to Horeb; persecution has ceased. No longer is Elijah afraid of Jezebel: he faces Ahab and denounces her crime and his.

Since the division of the kingdom it has not been possible for the king of Israel, however much a man like Omri might have wished it, to make himself a despot. The people were jealous of their rights. Elijah was the defender of their liberties, the champion in special of the free landowner. The murder of Naboth seems to have aroused the people more than did the Baal worship of the royal house, and to have had greater influence in bringing about the revolution which overthrew the house of Omri.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Jezreel, the modern Zerim, is on a hill two hundred feet high in the Plain of Esdraelon. Apparently it was the summer residence of Ahab, or perhaps it either replaced or rivalled Samaria as the capital at this time. Eastward between Mt. Gilboa and the hills of Galilee the broad Valley of Jezreel sweeps downward to Bethshan and the Jordan: westward the Great Plain of Esdraelon extends to the sea. The city was on the highways from Damascus to Egypt, from the coast to the Jordan. Straight before it is the range of Carmel, and Elijah's course to Jezreel ahead of Ahab's chariot after the contest on Carmel was doubtless over the path which to-day branches from the road to Nazareth and crosses due west to the foot of Carmel, following thence the bed of Kishon to Haifa. Naboth's vineyard seems to have lain before the palace windows. To-day wine-presses cut into the rock are to be seen on the eastern side of the hill.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Do you ever wonder where the sparrows get their food these cold days when the ground is covered with snow? I wondered the other day, and pitied them so that I threw out a large handful of crumbs to them. How pleased the birds were! Then one bird siezed a large piece and flew off with it. He could not eat it in peace because the other birds flew after him. They chased that sparrow up and down, here and there, trying to get that crumb away

from him, but he held it tight in his beak and would not let it go. There were still plenty of crumbs on the ground which the other sparrows could have had, but the only one they seemed to care for was the one this sparrow had.

Tell your pupils about these birds, and then tell them about things which children do that are just as silly. Even kings are sometimes as silly as sparrows and children. That one should not covet what another has is a hard lesson for a child to learn. Teach the hatefulness and sinfulness of selfishness and sulkiness: there is abundant material for you here under each of these topics.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. King Ahab was in his palace at Jezreel. Point it out on the map. When did we hear about this city before? Yes, when Elijah raced before Ahab's chariot in the rain from Mount Carmel to this place. Where did Elijah go the next day? What lessons did he learn at Horeb? After this he was probably away so long that Ahab and Jezebel had forgotten about him. One day Ahab looked around his ivory-walled palace, and was proud of its magnificence. When he went without and looked toward the east, what could he see? Toward the west? "All this land is mine" he must have thought, and then a frown crossed his face, for he was looking down at a vineyard that adjoined his palace grounds. "If I only owned that vineyard!" he sighed. Whose was it?

For Older Pupils. Do you recall that scene in Macbeth where Lady Macbeth urges her husband on to the murder of the king? Macbeth has told her that

> "We will proceed no further in this business:
> He hath honor'd me of late,"

and then Lady Macbeth's scorn blazes forth, and she accuses him of being a coward

> "Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
> Like the poor cat i' the adage."

"Prithee, peace," Macbeth answers:

> "I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more is none."

Her words prevail and Macbeth nerves himself to murder Duncan the king. But he brings back to their chamber the bloody daggers.

> "Why did you bring those daggers from the place?
> They must lie there: go carry them, and smear
> The sleeping grooms with blood,"

commands Lady Macbeth. But Macbeth replies:

> "I'll go no more:
> I am afraid to think what I have done;
> Look on't again I dare not."

"Infirm of purpose! Give me the dagger!" then exclaims Lady Macbeth, and when she returns from carrying out her purpose she cries: "My hands are of your color, but I shame to wear a heart so white."

How like Lady Macbeth's "Give me the dagger!" is Queen Jezebel's "I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth!" How like Lady Macbeth is Jezebel herself! "A very Jezebel" we say of some strong-willed, masterful woman, who fears neither God nor man, a Lucretia Borgia who dominated the papacy, a Catherine de' Medici who was really the one who ordered the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day.

From the time that Jezebel entered the kingdom of Israel as its queen till her death, her evil deeds form a large part of its history, and her evil influence was continued in the southern kingdom through her daughter Athaliah, who married the son of Jehoshaphat. We shall hear about her next quarter.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Beware of Covetousness

Ahab's Covetousness. Ahab was a rich king; Naboth the owner of a vineyard. The vineyard made into a garden of herbs adjoining the king's palace would, no doubt, add much to the luxurious grounds, and it was natural for the king to wish to purchase it, if Naboth were willing to sell. But Ahab found the vineyard could not be acquired lawfully, and then the desire so filled his heart that he had no joy in his already great possessions. We have a proverb that says: The cow in the meadow, knee-deep in clover, often looks over the hedge and longs for the common. The one thing Ahab could not have was the one thing he most wanted. What cared he for the feelings or rights of Naboth? We call his sin covetousness, and rightly, but fundamentally it was selfishness, that basal sin which is the root of all sin. When the Lebanon cedar gets a start in the young forest it crowds out all other vegetable life: no fir nor hemlock, no fern nor flower even, can thrive where those cedars flourish. So selfishness when it has gained a good start in the garden of the heart crowds out the flowers of kindness, thoughtfulness for others, self-sacrifice, justice.

How to Overcome Covetousness. If you covet the possessions of others what you need is a greater appreciation of your own possessions. Those who long for things they do not have, usually do not appreciate the things they do have. They think they would be happy if certain things they coveted were only theirs, but happiness would still elude them were their longing gratified, for then they would covet something else. Ownership is not the whole of possession. As the little child in one of George MacDonald's stories says, "Love makes the only myness." He who has not learned to possess small possessions will not be able to possess greater ones. It is better to possess the things we have than to have things we know not how to possess.

Fill your hearts so full of gratitude to God for the good gifts He has given you that you will not think of being covetous of those you lack. A fable printed in the Youth's Companion over sixty years ago impresses this truth: A dove thus made her complaint to the guardian spirit of the feathered tribe: "Kind genius, why is it that the hoarse-voiced and strutting peacock spreads his gaudy train to the sun, dazzling the eye of every passer-by; whilst I, in my plain plumage, am overlooked and forgotten by all? Thy ways, kind Genius, seem not to be equal towards those under thy care and protection."

The Genius listened to her complaint, and replied: "I will grant thee a train similar in richness to one of the gaudy bird you seem to envy, and shall demand of thee but one condition in return."

"What is that?" eagerly inquired the dove, overjoyed at the prospect of possessing what seemed to promise so much happiness.

"It is," said the Genius, "that you consent to surrender those qualities of meekness, tenderness, constancy and love, for which thy family have been distinguished in all time."

"Let me consider," said the dove. "No—I cannot consent to such an exchange. No, not for all the gaudy plumage, the showy train of that vain bird, will I surrender those qualities of my family from time immemorial. I must decline, good Genius, the condition you propose."

"Then why complain, dear bird? Has not providence bestowed upon thee qualities which thou valuest more than all the gaudy adorning you admire? Art thou discontented still?"

II Sulkiness

Ahab flung himself on his Couch, turned away his Face and would eat no Bread. The weak rage and childish sulking of Ahab are very characteristic of a feeble and selfish nature, accustomed to be humored and not thwarted. These fits of temper seem to have been common with him; for he was in one at the end of the preceding chapter, as he is now. "No meat will down with him for want of a salad, because wanting Naboth's vineyard for a garden of herbs." As he lies there, like a spoiled child, all because he could not get his own way, he may serve for an example of the misery of unbridled selfish-

ness and unregulated desires. An acre or two of land was a small matter to get into such a state about, and there are few things that are worth a wise or a strong man's being so troubled. Hezekiah might "turn his face to the wall" in the extremity of sickness; but Ahab in doing it is only a poor, feeble creature who has weakly set his heart on what is not his, and weakly whimpers because he cannot have it. To be thus at the mercy of our own ravenous desires, and so utterly miserable when they are thwarted, is unworthy of manhood, and is sure to bring many a bitter moment; for there are more disappointments than gratifications in store for such a one. *Alexander Maclaren,* in the *First Book of Kings.*

The Man with the Grouch. The great calamity that befell Ahab was that he could not have his own way in a small matter. He acted like a baby. The world is full of people who are only grown-up children that have not left behind their smallness of mind with their smallness of stature. Sulking and pouting because they can't get their own way are bad enough in children, but they are far worse in adults. "If a man leaves himself to himself and lets him have his own way with himself, he will be a little less valuable a man by nightfall than he was in the morning," says Dr. C. H. Parkhurst. What if the process is continued day after day?

We all know the man with the grouch even if that word "grouch" is not defined for us in the dictionary. At a recent dinner a Chicago physician declared that the man with the grouch cannot resist disease like his more contented brother. "A grouchy man is governed by his grouch as a miser is governed by his meanness. The man with the grouch is gloomy, and gloominess brings on ill health, weakness and dyspepsia." Perhaps we have here the scientific explanation of the reason Ahab would not eat!

How the world looks at the man who sulks because he has a grouch or a grievance is shown in this morning's New York Tribune. "Why is it that we have no more fiction from the pen of Thomas Hardy?" the article questions, and then after offering the explanation of others, that the cause was "the public's lack of cordiality," it adds: "This is incredible. A great writer does not sulk." A man who is great in any line of work does not sulk. Imagine Paul or Gladstone or Phillips Brooks in a fit of sulks!

When to Sulk and Cry. The other day I met a man older and wiser than any of the rest. He was very old and very wise, and he told me:

"It is bad luck to cry on Monday. To cry on Tuesday makes red eyes. Crying on Wednesday is bad for children's heads and for the heads of other people. It is said that if a child begins to cry on Thursday, he will find it hard to stop. It is not best for children to cry on Friday. It makes them unhappy. Never cry on Saturday. It is too busy a day. Tears shed on the Sabbath are sad and bitter. Children should on no account cry at night. The nights are for sleep. They may cry whenever else they please, but not at any of these times, unless it is for something serious."

I wrote down the rules just as the old man gave them to me. Of course they will be of no use to boys and girls who are past six, for those children do not cry. The wise man meant them for the little ones—the millions of little boys and girls who want to do the right thing and the very best thing. *St. Nicholas.*

III. Your Sin Will Find You Out

What was Ahab's Sin? It was Jezebel who concocted the plot to murder Naboth and who had it carried out. Ahab knew not about it, it seems, until she bade him take possession of the vineyard, for Naboth was dead. And yet Elijah's question is, Hast *thou* killed, and also taken possession? And he denounces him as having sold himself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah. Was Ahab responsible for what Jezebel had done?

If several boys stand around a tree and eat the stolen apples which one boy who alone has climbed the tree throws down to them, is the boy in the tree the only guilty one? Is the clerk who uses a false weight a cheat while the employer who approves of the transaction is not? Is not a man who hires an assassin to kill another held by law as guilty as though he had done the deed himself? But, you say, Ahab did not know that Jezebel was going

to kill Naboth. He knew that she was going to get possession of the vineyard, and he knew that she could only do so by foul means. He was content to let her obtain it in any way she chose. And when she had accomplished her purpose, he was eager to reap the fruits of her crime. Josephus says that when he learned what Jezebel had done "he sprang from his bed with delight." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." In His sight the weak mortal who lets another do the wicked work for him and rejoices in the spoils has sold himself to do evil as surely as though he did it with his own hands. Ahab was a perjurer, a murderer, a thief. He had abandoned himself to the service of sin. "What did your vineyard cost you, Ahab? Very cheap was it not?" questions Mark Guy Pearse, and then replies to his question: "It cost *himself*. For that vineyard he gave his hope, his peace, his very life, *himself*. Sin has only one price, it takes the man."

How Sin finds One out. We often use the words of Moses to the children of Israel, Be sure your sin will find you out, as if they read, Be sure your sin will be found out, which is another matter. Your sin may never be found out, but it will find you out, for you cannot sin without suffering in character, though you may sin without suffering in reputation.

From a chapter in "The Corn of Heaven" by Hugh Macmillan, I condense these words in regard to sin's punishment: Every sin is punished in kind, and does not depend upon whether it is detected by others or not. Everything around us and within us attests the truth that God is a God of judgment, making men reap as they have sown, and it needs not to wait to the great judgment day to realize this—for every day after its own fashion is a judgment day, in which the sin of the sinner is disclosed to him by its consequences upon himself or others. The wages of sin is death, and these wages are paid here and now to every sin as soon as they are earned—the death of some faculty or power or possession or affection.

Then, too, men's sins often find them out though no visible sign or token may betray the fact to the world. All may outwardly stand fair; there may be no check to the worldly prosperity; nay, the prosperity may be greater than ever; and yet in the soul there may be that which takes all the joy and the relish out of life; the memory of that old sin which was as nothing when committed, but which now darkens all.

In a heap of corn that has been threshed and winnowed and gathered into the barn, it not infrequently happens that some of the grains have attached to them the germs of the smut disease which infected some of the stalks when growing in the field. You can only detect the presence of these germs by examining under a microscope the grain on which they fasten. This grain of corn is sown next spring as seed in the soil; it grows up and produces stem and blade. But all through its stages of growth the germ of the smut disease has been growing with it unseen and unknown, the plant continuing as green and healthy as any of its neighbors, but at last, when the ear of corn appears, it breaks out in its true character, and fills the green ear with a nauseous mass of soot-like powder, changing its meritorious substance into vile dust and ashes. And so sin works unseen and unknown, producing all the time its own proper results—yet unheeded because unfelt—but at last there comes a day when it brings forth, in such a way that it cannot be mistaken or disregarded, its awful, unprofitable, distressing fruit of darkness, and the sinner's sin has found him out, and he fears that he has sold himself for naught and in vain.

One whose Sin was found out and One whose Sin found him out. How vividly Hawthorne depicts the effect of sin in "The Scarlet Letter!" The scorned and insulted woman in the pillory, with the scarlet sign on her breast luridly proclaiming her shame is felt by all to be less an object of pity than is the eloquent pastor whose hidden guilt is eating out his heart; his agony is peculiarly subtle and terrible. He would be less tragically tormented were he at once to ascend the scaffold and share with the partner of his sin the bitter penalty of social shame. His high reputation, his rhetorical successes, the reverence paid to him, the honors showered upon him, only deepen his self-scorn and despair. Whilst a vestige of true humanity lingers in a man this agony is inevitable. *W. L. Watkinson*, in *The Supreme Conquest.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Weakness will darken into wickedness. *Alexander Maclaren.*

"A strong woman fallen is the most terrible thing in human failure."

How potent a woman's influence is for good or ill; but an evil woman will more quickly debase her husband than a noble woman will uplift him.—*Meyer.*

Though hand join in hand, the evil man shall not be unpunished. Prov.11.21.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness, we read in Isaiah. Take heed and beware.

Such a spirit as Ahab's, who pouted and fretted because he could not have what he wanted, leads some Jezebel to suggest an evil plan by which to grasp the longed-for prize. Beware of indulging in such a mood, and beware of the terrible influence of an ignoble friend.

Those who approve the sin of others and share in its spoils, are guilty of the sin.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

Near Ahab's palace in Jezreel was a vineyard that the king coveted and tried to buy, but Naboth, its owner, would not part with his inheritance. The petulant king, so unexpectedly thwarted in his wish, entered the palace, threw himself on his couch, and refused to eat. Jezebel his wife inquired the cause of his displeasure. Naboth would not let him have the vineyard that he wanted for an herb garden. Tauntingly Jezebel asked him if in truth he ruled in Israel; if he was too weak to get what he wanted she would get it for him. So Jezebel wrote letters, which she signed with the king's seal, to the elders and nobles bidding them proclaim a fast, set Naboth in a prominent place, have ready two witnesses to swear that they had heard Naboth curse God and the king, and then have him carried without the city and stoned to death.

When Jezebel learned that her plan had been carried out, she gleefully told Ahab that Naboth was dead and he could go and take possession of the vineyard. Ahab started, and was met by the stern prophet: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" the king said with a start. "I have found thee," solemnly returned Elijah, "because thou hast sold thyself to do evil," and then he announced the retribution that would overtake him and his descendants. In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, there they would lick up the blood of Ahab, and by the wall of Jezreel would they devour the body of Jezebel; Ahab's family to its last member would be destroyed. Then Ahab mourned and fasted and because of his repentance the doom pronounced upon his house was postponed till his son's day.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The great Ahabs that swallow up the poor Naboths.
2. The same standard of righteousness for high and low.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Give an account of Elisha's first meeting with Elijah. (1 K. 19.19-21.) 2. What waters were divided for Moses? (Ex. 14.21-22.) 3. For Joshua? 4. What is meant by "a double portion of spirit?" (Dt. 21.17.) 5. To whom were the words "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof" again applied? (2 K. 13.14.) 6. How did Elijah once wish to die? 7. What earlier hero was translated? (Gen. 5.24.)

Questions to Think About. 1. Why did Elijah ask Elisha to stay behind? 2. Was it selfish in Elisha to ask for "a double portion" of his master's spirit? 3. What is the meaning of "chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof"? 4. What qualities does Elisha show in this chapter?

Note-Book Work. 1. In your life of Elijah write Scene X, Elijah and Jezebel. Divide it into four Acts: Act I, Jezebel's Coming to Samaria and Establishing there the Worship of Baal; Act II, How Jezebel secured Naboth's Vineyard; Act III, Elijah denouncing Ahab; Act IV, The Death of Jezebel.

LESSON X—MARCH 5

ELIJAH GOES UP BY A WHIRLWIND INTO HEAVEN

Golden Text

Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. Gen. 5.24.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 1.1-18. The Experience of Ahaziah with the Prophet. **T.** 2 Kings 2.1-12. Elijah Carried into Heaven by a Whirlwind. **W.** 2 Kings 2.13-18. The Vain Search for Elijah's Body. **T.** Gen. 5.21-24; Heb. 11.1-6. Enoch Translated that he should not See Death. **F.** Ps. 49.1-15. God will Redeem from the Power of Death. **S.** Ps. 23.1-6. I will not Fear the Shadow of Death. **S.** 2 Cor. 5.1-10. The House not Made with Hands. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 2.1-18 PRINT vv. 1-11 COMMIT vv. 11, 12

1 And it came to pass, when Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me as far as Bethel. And Elisha said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. 3 And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. 7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off: and they two stood by the Jordan. 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. 9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *When Jehovah would.* "That *when* is the doctrine of Providence over human life" (*Parker*).—*Take up.* Compare Lev. 5.24. "The writer uses the figure which most nearly describes such a manifestation as that by which Elijah was translated. Human speech must, of course, fail to convey a true picture of so sublime a scene" (*Lumby*).—*Elisha.* Since the account of his call, 1 K. 19.19-21, we have heard nothing of Elisha, but in 2 K. 3.11 he is described as the one "who poured water on the hands of Elijah," that is, who acted as the attendant of the aged prophet.—*Went from Gilgal.* From Gilgal, where many of the prophets lived, they went to visit other prophetic centers.

2. *Tarry here, I pray thee.* So Naomi besought Ruth to leave her when she

was returning from the land of Moab, Ruth 1.15. Perhaps he would test his follower's devotion and faithfulness, or perhaps he wished to be alone at the end as Moses had been alone.—*As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth.* A solemn assertion, repeated in vv. 4 and 6. Compare Ruth's answer, Ruth 1. 16, 17.

3. *The sons of the prophets.* Youths in training as assistants of the prophets, grouped in various schools or colleges. There were schools of prophets in the time of Samuel.—*Hold ye your peace.* "This is no subject for idle talk" (*Farrar*).

5. *To-day.* Perhaps used in the sense of "very soon."

6. *To the Jordan.* To Gilead across the Jordan.

8. *Wrapped it together.* He made a roll of his mantle and used it as Moses did his rod, Ex. 7.17, 20.—*And smote the waters, and they were divided.* Compare Ex. 14.21, 22. "As there are fords at Jericho, the object of this miracle, as of the one subsequently ascribed to Elisha, is not self-evident. Nothing is more certain than that there is a divine economy in the exercise of supernatural powers" (*F. W. Farrar*). It was doubtless the same place where at the crossing of Joshua and the children of Israel "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap and those that came down toward the salt sea failed, and were cut off, and the people passed over right against Jericho," Joshua 3.16; for it was then the time of the overflow of the Jordan when the fords were not passable.

9. *When they were gone over.* Or, *as they went,* RVm.—*A double portion of thy spirit.* That is, the portion of the first born, RVm. See Dt. 21.17. He does not ask for twice as much power and inspiration as Elijah had, but for twice what a younger son would inherit, twice as much as perhaps the other sons of the prophets would receive: he would be a worthy successor of his master. His was a far less powerful personality than Elijah's.

10. *A hard thing.* Your request is not in my power to grant, but in God's.—*If thou see me when I am taken from thee.* That would be a sign that God had granted his prayer.

11. *A chariot of fire.* Oh, *chariots,* RVm. Compare 2 K. 6.17. Perhaps the dazzling light appeared to Elisha as chariots of fire. Elijah is often represented as ascending in a flaming chariot: the text merely says that "he went up by a whirlwind into heaven," the chariots attending.

12. *My father.* A title of affection, probably used among the prophets. Compare 1 Sam. 10.12.—*The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof.* This clause is in opposition with "my father," and is addressed to Elijah. Dr. Clarke gives the Chaldaic translation, which has the sense of the words: My master, my master! who by thy intercession wast of more use to Israel than horses or chariots. When Luther died, one of his co-workers exclaimed: "Alas, he has gone, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, who has ruled the church in this age of the world." Some scholars, notably Dr. Maclaren, think the clause refers to the vision, verse 11. Against this interpretation is the same use of the words by king Joash at Elisha's death-bed, 2 K. 13.14, where this could not be the sense.—*Rent them in two places.* In token of his grief at the departure of Elijah. Compare Gen. 37.34; Job 1.20.

15. *The sons of the prophets that were at Jericho.* Verse 7.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

6. *And they two went on.* So these two, leaving the sons of the prophets behind, passed down the falling land as the great planets pass to their setting through the groups of lesser stars. The mountains of The-Other-Side filled the view ahead of them, and in these mountains lay the sepulchre of Moses. He, who in helplessness had already fled for new inspiration to Horeb, could not fail to wonder whether God was to lay him to rest beside his forerunner on Nebo. In front there was no promised land visible,—nothing but that high sky-line eastward with the empty heaven above it. Behind there was no nation waiting to press into the future—nothing but that single follower who persisted in following to the end. And so, the story tells us, the end came. The river, that had drawn back at a nation's feet, parted at the stroke of one man, and as he suddenly passed away to the God from whom he had suddenly come,

it was one man whom he acknowledged as his heir, and to whom he left his spirit. *George Adam Smith,* in *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.*

10. *If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee.* If you have asked to be a prophet you have asked a hard thing. If you fulfill the condition, this will be granted to you, and the double portion may be yours. The condition was this, "If thou see me." In other words, it is by the vision that you become the prophet. I have no doubt that it referred Elisha to this, that he was to be witness to immortality in the age of apostacy; he was to bear witness to what he saw. He had seen Elijah translated and that is what every prophet of God is called upon to do, to bear testimony to what he saw. The school can educate the prophet, can equip him, can aid him to give expression to the message. But it is the vision that creates. *John Wilson,* in *Record of Christian Work.*

11. *By a whirlwind.* There is a lesson here for us; and it is this. That the way of our going, as well as the time, is of the Lord's determination, and not of ours. One says, I want to die suddenly; and God replies, "No that is not the way: You are to have a lingering death." I should like to die lingeringly, but quietly, says another, and God says, "That is not the way: suddenly a bolt shall strike thee." Another man says: I should like to die like a shock of corn full ripe; and God says, "No, thou shalt be cut down in the greenness of thy youth, in the immaturity of thy power." *Joseph Parker,* in *People's Bible.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

11. *Elijah went up into heaven.* Malachi prophesied that Elijah would be the precursor of the Messiah (4.4-6), and Jesus taught His disciples that John the Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Mt. 11.14). At the Transfiguration Elijah and Moses were seen, Mt. 17.3. In Jewish and Mohammedan legends Elijah is the mysterious wanderer who often appears and disappears. Ever since his death the Jew has been awaiting his return. In the era of the Talmud, goods without owners were laid aside until Elijah's coming.

To-day a seat is prepared for him at the circumcision of a Jewish child, and at a certain moment in the passover feast the door is opened for him to enter. The custom at the passover is thus graphically told in one of Israel Zangwill's stories: The first part of the elaborate Passover ritual passed peacefully, and the evening meal—mercifully set in the middle—was reached. But Elijah's goblet still stood in the center of the table untasted. Every time the ritual cup-drinking came round, the children glanced at the great silver goblet placed for the Prophet of Redemption. Alas! the brimming raisin wine remained ever at the same level. They found consolation in the thought that the great moment was still to come, the moment of the third cup, when, mother throwing open the door, father would rise, holding the goblet on high, and sonorously salute an unseen visitor. True, in other years, though they had almost heard the rush of wings, the great shining cup had remained full, and when it was replaced on the white cloth, a vague resentment, as at a spurned hospitality, had stirred in each youthful breast. But many reasons could be found to exculpate Elijah,—not omitting their own sins.

13. *He took up the mantle of Elijah.* Among the Persians the prophet's mantle is a symbol of spiritual power, and is transferred from one prophet to his successor. Among the Hindus when a Brahmin is inducted into the sacred office he is always covered with a yellow mantle. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Manners and Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the last chapter of First Kings we learn about the death of Ahab and the accession of Ahaziah his son. In the first chapter of Second Kings we are told of the death of Ahaziah. When injured by a fall he sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover. Elijah met the messengers and bade them return and tell the king: "Thus saith Jehovah, Is it because there is no God in Israel that thou sendest to inquire of Baalzebub? Therefore thou shalt surely die." The king despatched a company of soldiers to arrest Elijah, and the prophet called down fire from heaven upon

them. The same fate befell the second company sent, but with the third company Elijah went to the king and repeated his message. Ahaziah died according to Elijah's word, and Jehoram, his brother, reigned in his stead.

The next recorded event is the translation of Elijah. Because mention is made in 2 Ch. 21.12 of a letter from Elijah sent to Jehoram of Judah, who made himself king along with Jehoshaphat in the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel, some scholars believe that Elijah's translation is recorded too early in Second Kings: other scholars regard the letter as a posthumous message of Elijah whereby "the commands of God, laid upon Elijah, were carried out subsequently to his death."

How long Elijah lived and how the closing years of his life were spent, we do not know. It may be that the lesson he learned on Mount Horeb, that the idolatry of the people could be overthrown, not by one great miracle, but by long continued effort, led him to engage in active superintendence of the schools of the prophets, teaching those in training there how to complete his mission. There is no chronological note in the account to tell us when he ended his work; it was "when Jehovah would take Elijah into heaven."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

There were at least three places called *Gilgal,* literally, a circle of stones, a cromlech. The Gilgal from which Elijah and Elisha started could not have been the one in the Jordan Valley, for they went from Gilgal *down* to Bethel. It was probably the one among the hills of Ephraim, about eight miles north of Bethel. *Bethel* was on the southern frontier of Samaria, on the great highway between Galilee and Judea. From a mountain east of Bethel Lot surveyed the land and made his choice. At Bethel Jacob had his vision, and here Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves for worship. *Jericho,* the city taken by Joshua on entering the promised land, was in the Jordan valley six miles from the river, and also the same distance from the Dead Sea. From Bethel to Jericho was a distance of about fifteen miles. When the two prophets crossed the Jordan into *Moab* they were near the spot where Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and near Mount Nebo, where Moses lay buried in the grave which no man knew.

As you bring out the story, follow the course on your map from Gilgal to Bethel, to Jericho, to the Jordan, and across to the neighborhood of Mount Nebo.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Make Elisha, not Elijah, the central figure in this lesson for your pupils. Begin with the call of Elisha when he was at work ploughing (1 K. 19.19-21), picture his surprise when Elijah threw his mantle over him, explain the meaning of the act, and dwell on Elisha's readiness to follow Elijah. For many years Elisha was with Elijah, as his young pupil and also "pouring water on his hands" (2 K. 3.11), or doing for him all the small services that the aged prophet needed. Then picture the scene as the two men, one old and one much younger, walked along a country road together. Repeat the conversation at Gilgal and Bethel and Jericho in the same words, for your pupils like repetitions. Show how Elisha's love for his master made him persist in following him. Picture the old man folding together his goatskin mantle and with it striking the waters of the Jordan, and fifty prophets watching from afar, as the two crossed over to the other side. Make clear Elisha's great desire that he might have his master's spirit and be worthy of continuing his work. Tell them about the little slave girl, p. 130, and expand its application. Then describe the swift rush of the whirlwind, the horses of fire and the chariot of fire that seemed to Elisha to part them, and Elijah's disappearance in the whirlwind, as God took him to Himself. His mantle fell at Elisha's feet; Elisha was to continue his work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. How was it that Queen Jezebel once made up her mind

that Elijah should die? Where was it that Elijah himself once wished to die? When did the end of Elijah's life come? "When God would take him up to heaven." That was not when Jezebel would have Elijah killed, nor was it when Elijah was so discouraged that he prayed to die; God still had work for the prophet, and the end came only in God's good time. If Elijah had died when he wished out in the wilderness it would have been an inglorious ending; the end which came was glorious, as mysterious as had been his life.

As you bring out the story, trace the journey from Gilgal to the other side of the Jordan.

For Older Pupils. In "The Spy," James Fenimore Cooper says: "It was no uncommon sight to see a veteran warrior laying aside the sword to assume the ermine on the benches of the highest judicial authority." As the sword is the emblem of the warrior, so the ermine is of the judge. The official robe of the judge in England is lined and faced with the skins of little animals called the ermine, accordingly the ermine stands for the office.

The graduates of certain colleges in England wear a lamb's skin hood or cloak. Did you know that these insignia can be traced back to Elijah's mantle, which was the skin of an animal dressed with the hair on?

When the mantle of Elijah, the emblem of his authority as a prophet, fell to Elisha, that was Elisha's induction into the prophet's office. For Elijah the end of his ministry, and for Elisha the beginning of his ministry, has come. The story forcibly recalls the time when Moses laid down his work and Joshua took it up. Many parallels could be drawn between the lives of Moses and Elijah, and of Joshua and Elisha. As in his deep discouragement Elijah sought Mount Horeb, where Moses had communed with God, so now as he realizes God is about to take him to Himself he seeks the spot where God had taken Moses. Alone Moses had ascended Mount Nebo; alone Elijah would go to the same land of Moab, but Elisha would not leave his master, his love impelled him to persist in following.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I God Took Him

The Three Translations. Early in the Bible record, in the fifth chapter of Genesis, we read of the first translation. And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. Beautifully has Dr. J. T. McFarland expressed all that we know about Enoch:

They talked and walked, down many years—
The way was called The Vale of Tears;
But he who walked with God received
Such comfort that he little grieved.

And walking thus, and talking so,
The Man and God fared onward slow,
Until they reached a secret spot—
God took him, and the man was not.

And it came to pass many centuries later, that Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven. He, too, had walked and talked with God; God took him and he was not. The rushing whirlwind was a fitting accompaniment for the departure of the stormy prophet.

But no man ever walked and talked with God as did His Son Jesus Christ. Forty days after His resurrection He and His disciples were on the Mount of Olives over against Bethany. And He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.

Glorious Deaths. "Death is a glorious event to one going to Jesus," said David Livingstone.

Triumphant and glorious was the passing away from life of the famous evangelist, Dwight L. Moody. "He was not yearning to go; he loved his work"; said his son. "But suddenly he exclaimed, 'Earth recedes; heaven opens before me.' The first impulse was to try to arouse him from what ap-

peared to be a dream. 'No, this is no dream, Will,' he replied. 'It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go.'"

In the South Kensington Museum there hangs a picture of "The Death of Cromwell." The bed, the face of his daughter, the whole room are in shadows, but a bright light emanates from the Bible lying on his breast and flashes upward into his face a glory not of earth. The artist has pictured the secret of all glorious deaths. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.

Jehovah would take him into Heaven.

Men mourned about the Christian's couch, and said:
"Alas! He leaveth home; this night he will be dead";
While angels, smiling o'er the group forlorn,
Whispered: "He cometh home, this night he will be born."

W. B. Seabrook.

II Catching the Master's Spirit

The Double Portion. Elisha knew that to meet this new responsibility, to be prophet in the place of Elijah, he must be filled with the spirit and power of Elijah. Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me, was his eager prayer. They were as father and son. Not twice as much wisdom and authority as the father had, but the elder son's portion, twice as much as a younger son would receive, Elisha craved. The mantle was the symbol of the prophet, it could not make the prophet: Elisha would not possess the symbol of the prophet without the endowment of the prophet. Elisha's was a feebler nature than Elijah's, but his prayer was answered, he was enabled to carry on Elijah's work. The sons of the prophets recognized him as their new leader, they bowed themselves to the ground before him and they said, the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.

Elisha could not be Elijah. He took up Elijah's mantle, but he wore it in his own way. When President Taft succeeded President Roosevelt, he said that he intended to carry out the policies of his predecessor, but he did not say that he aimed to be a second Roosevelt. No one can be other than himself without being a failure. "You are now Washington's legitimate successor, and occupy a position of almost dangerous elevation," General Sherman once wrote to General Grant, "but if you continue, as heretofore, to be yourself,—simple, honest, and unpretending—you will enjoy through life the respect and love of friends and the homage of millions of human beings."

You recall how the mantle of Moses fell on the shoulders of Joshua. And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt go with this people into the land which Jehovah hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And Jehovah, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be discouraged. And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him.

We turn to Christ's ascension, and we see no mantle falling upon any successor, for no one could step into His place, but we do hear the promise of power given to that waiting group of disciples. Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power, from on high. Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses. And at Pentecost we see that power bestowed. The elder son's portion was theirs—and may be everyone's.

How to gain the Master's Spirit. A statute of a beautiful Greek slave-girl, neatly and becomingly dressed, once stood in the market place of Athens. A dirty, ragged slave-girl stopped and gazed at the statute in great wonderment. The next day she came again to gaze, but this time her face was washed and her hair was combed. On the third day her dress had been washed and mended. Day after day she stopped to look at the wonderful model, and day by day she imitated something she saw there till no one would have recognized in her the girl as first she was. So we may study and imitate our Great

Model, catching more and more of His spirit from day to day, till we, too, are transformed.

III Faithful Devotion

The Examples of Elisha and Ruth. Stay at Gilgal, Stay at Bethel, Stay at Jericho, said Elijah to Elisha, and three times came the answer: As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth. I will not leave thee. I cannot tarry at Gilgal, nor at Bethel, nor at Jericho. Elisha persisted in following his master and friend till the very end, and so he had his experience of the reality and nearness of the spiritual world.

Very forcibly this account recalls how Naomi urged Ruth to leave her, and return to her own people. The strength of Ruth's love for Naomi is shown in her answer. No stronger expression of devotion can be found in all literature than Ruth's immortal words: "Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. No wonder that Naomi when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, left off speaking unto her.

Were Elijah and Naomi testing Elisha and Ruth by their oft-repeated words urging them not to go on with them? If so, they nobly stood the test. Theirs was a steadfast devotion, that nothing could alter.

Loyal Devotion to God. What is religion but loyalty to God? questions Dr. Horace Bushnell. Religion is not an occasional mood; it is an abiding habit. David Livingstone's religion was surely loyalty to God. Nothing could swerve him from his purpose. No hardship was too great to be borne in carrying it out. "The trouble with too much of what we call devotion," some one has remarked, "is that it costs nothing, is only a sort of gilded selfishness, is not ready to sacrifice anything, to give up, to suffer, to endure. To love as Christ loves is to repeat Christ's sacrifice continually, in serving, forgiving, bearing, enduring, that others may be helped, blessed, saved." David Livingstone endured twenty-seven attacks of fever, many assaults from savages, the terrible journeys in the jungle, but his determination to keep on was not weakened. Then his men absolutely refused to go farther, and declared that they would leave him in the desert. "After using all my powers of persuasion," he said, "I declared that, if they returned I should go on alone, and returning to my little tent I lifted up my heart to Him who hears the sighing of the soul. Presently the head man came in. 'Do not be disturbed; he said, 'we will never leave you. Wherever you lead we will follow.'"

SENTENCE SERMONS

Death or life, each is God's. *George Macdonald.*

Lift your glad voices in triumph on high
For Jesus is risen, and man shall not die. *Henry Ware.*

It is not enough to don the mantle, we must also do the deed. *Joseph Bush.*

Perhaps there is no more important component of character than steadfast resolution. *Theodore Roosevelt.*

The spirit which came out from God, which is akin to God, returns to God, who gave it: lives with God. *Charles Cuthbert Hall.*

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright;
For there is a happy end to the men of peace. Ps. 37.37.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Are you inclined to tarry at Gilgal, or after continuing as far as Bethel to tarry there, or even to press on to Jericho and then tarry within sight of the Jordan? Elisha could not see Elijah when he was taken from him,—the "sign" given him whereby he should know that his prayer was granted—without continuing with him to the end, looking, expecting, watching. The blessing comes to him who is faithful to the end.

With Elisha's sense of responsibility was coupled his sense of need: only with

the help of Elijah's God could he carry on Elijah's work. Do we sometimes assume a duty without asking divine help in its accomplishment?

Ask what I shall do for thee, said Elijah. How that tested Elisha! How our prayers in which we ask God for blessings test us!

"Elijah did not see death, and to us in no less glorious sense shall death be swallowed up in victory."

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. Elijah's last journey, 1-8.
II. Elisha's request, 9, 10.
III. Elijah's translation, 11, 12.
IV. Elijah's successor, 13-15.
V. Elijah vainly sought, 16-18.

In God's own time Elijah's end came. With Elisha, his attendant, he started out to visit for the last time the schools of the prophets. At Gilgal he bade Elisha remain behind while he went on to Bethel, but in very solemn words Elisha expressed his determination to stay with his master and friend to the end. At Bethel the prophets were impressed that this was Elijah's last journey, and they said so to Elisha. "Yes, I know it," answered Elisha, and then added, "Do not speak of it," he could not bear to have the thought put into words. Again Elijah bade him stay behind, and again he persisted in continuing with him. The prophets at Jericho repeated the words of those at Bethel, and received the same answer. A third time Elijah tested Elisha's loyal love. Elijah and Elisha went on to the Jordan, with fifty prophets following afar. Elijah rolled his mantle together, struck the waters with it, the waters parted and they crossed over on dry land. As they stood together on the other side Elijah asked his friend what last blessing he wished. Quietly came Elisha's answer—a double portion of thy spirit, the elder son's portion of an inheritance. That was not in Elijah's power to grant, but he told Elisha that if he saw his departure he might know that his prayer was answered: power is in proportion to insight, and insight is in proportion to watchfulness, intensity of desire.

Then came a sudden cyclone. What seemed to Elisha a chariot and horses of fire parted them, and in that whirlwind Elijah passed from the seen to the unseen world. "My father, my father!" exclaimed Elisha in his grief, "Thou wast of greater defense to Israel than chariots and horsemen!"

Elisha rent his clothes in token of his grief, took up Elijah's mantle, and went to the bank of the Jordan where he repeated Elijah's miracle. The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha, said the prophets who had been left on the other side of the Jordan. They urged Elisha to send them in search of Elijah, but he refused at first, knowing such a search would be futile, and then because they persisted he allowed them to go. But they found him not.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. No one is indispensable in this world.
2. Workers in God's kingdom should prepare others to take their places.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the entire story. 2. What did Jesus say about the one who received a prophet? (Mt. 10.40-42.) 3. Why did the prophet talk to the woman through Gehazi? (Clipping, p. 134.) 4. When were the disciples of Jesus unwilling, like Gehazi, that their Master should be troubled by a mother's entreaties? (Mt. 15.21-28.) 5. When had Elisha himself spoken the words of the mother in v. 30? (Last lesson.) 6. Why did Elisha tell Gehazi to salute no one on the way? (Clipping, p. 134.) 7. When did Jesus bid disciples salute no one by the way? (Luke 10.2.) 8. What do we hear later in the book about this Shunammite woman? (2 K. 8.1-6.)

Questions to think about. 1. What was probably the cause of the child's death? 2. What did the father mean by his question, v. 23? 3. Did the mother mean to deceive when she told Gehazi "It is well," v. 26? 4. Why did Elisha send Gehazi to lay his staff on the dead child?

Note-Book Work. 1. Write Scene XI in your Life of Elijah, Elijah's Translation. 2. Draw a map and trace the last journey of Elijah.

LESSON XI—MARCH 12

ELISHA THE PROPHET RESTORES A CHILD TO LIFE

Golden Text

The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 6.23.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 4.8-16. The Prophet's Sense of Obligation. **T.** 2 Kings 4.17-37. The Child Restored to Life. **W.** 2 Kings 2.19-22. Healing of Waters at Jericho. **T.** 2 Kings 3.1-27. The Defeat of the Moabites. **F.** 2 Kings 4.1-7. The Helping of the Poor Widow. **S.** 2 Kings 4.38-44. Feeding a Multitude of People. **S.** Mark 5.21-24, 35-43. Jesus Restoring a Little Maid. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 4.8-37 PRINT vv. 25-37 COMMIT vv. 32-35

25 So she went, and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel.
And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is the Shunammite: 26 run, I pray thee, now to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. 27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to thrust her away; but the man of God said, Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. 28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me? 29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again; and lay my staff upon the face of the child. 30 And the mother of the child said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her. 31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he returned to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.
32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto Jehovah. 34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. 37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground: and she took up her son, and went out.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

18. *A great woman.* Of great possessions, as the word is used in 1 Sam. 25.2, and 2 Sam. 19.32.

19. *My head, my head.* Evidently he was sunstruck. See Ps. 121.6; Isa. 49.10. I know by experience, says Dr. Thomson, that this valley glows like a furnace in harvest time.

21. *On the bed of the man of God.* See verse 10.

23. *Neither new moon nor sabbath.* The beginning of the month, as well as the sabbath, was a time for offering sacrifices, Num. 10.10, 28.11; 1 Ch. 23.31. All work ceased during the feast of the new moon, Amos 8.5, and then the

young man and the ass could well be spared.—*It shall be well.* Heb. *Peace,* RVm. She had no time to stop for explanations.

25. *To Mount Carmel.* A journey of five or six hours.

26. *It is well.* Gehazi had asked the question much as we ask on meeting another, "How are you?" without expecting the one greeted to give us exact information as to his health, and she gave the customary answer, which was not intended to deceive; she simply avoided wasting time in words with Gehazi as she had done with her husband, v. 23.

27. *The hill.* Mount Carmel.—*She caught hold of his feet.* She was overcome now with her grief.—*Gehazi came near to thrust her away.* Compare Gehazi with the disciples who wished to have the Canaanitish woman sent away, Mt. 15.23.—*Vexed.* Heb. *bitter,* RV.

28. *Did I desire a son of my lord?* See verses 12-17. She had not asked for a son, and now in her grief at losing him she thinks the gift has been a mockery; she does not feel that "it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

29. *Gird up thy loins.* Fasten the loosely flowing garment at the waist with a girdle, so as to make greater haste. See p. .—*Take thy staff.* Which answered the purpose of Moses' rod, Ex. 4.17.—*Salute him not.* Compare Jesus' directions to His disciples, Lk. 10.4, and see Light from Oriental Life.

30. *I will not leave thee.* She would not trust to Gehazi's power with Elisha's staff.

31. *The child is not awakened.* He speaks of the child as asleep, but means thereby that he was dead: compare Job 14.12; Ps. 13.3.—*His bed.* Verse 21.

33. *Them twain.* Them two. Because the next verse says, that "he went up," *i. e.* to the upper chamber where the dead child lay; it may be that the prayer was uttered on the lower floor and the "two" were the prophet and the mother.

34. *And lay upon the child.* Compare Elijah's method with the widow's son, 1 K. 17.21. He used every natural means in his power, seeking to convey the warmth of his body to that of the child, and to inflate his lungs, while he also prayed unto Jehovah, v. 33, to work a miracle.

35. *Walked to and fro.* To regain his natural warmth, after contact with the child's cold body.—*Stretched himself.* Or, *bowed himself,* RVm.—*Seven times.* Often.

37. *Bowed herself to the ground.* This expression of gratitude was her first thought.—*Went out.* We hear again of her in 2 K. 8.1-6.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

19. *Carry him to his mother.* Notice how clearly the husband is sketched in—an old man, who evidently did not understand his wife, who had had no experience of children, and could only hurry the boy off to his mother, when he fell ill in the harvest field. "Oh! how unfortunate falling ill in this way! What am I to do with him? I don't know, I never did know what to do with children. Here, take him to his mother, she will know!" *A. Allen Brockington,* in *Old Testament Miracles.*

34. *He went up.*

> "A little chamber built upon the wall,
> With stool, and table, candlestick, and bed,
> Where he might sit, or kneel, or lay his head,
> At night or sultry noontide; this was all
> A prophet's need: but in that chamber small
> What mighty prayers arose, what grace was shed;
> What gifts were given, potent to wake the dead,
> And from its viewless flight a soul recall!
> And still what miracles of grace are wrought
> In many a lonely chamber with shut door,
> Where God our Father is in secret sought,
> And shows Himself in mercy more and more!
> Dim upper-rooms with God's own glory shine,
> And souls are lifted to the life Divine."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

10. *Let us make a little chamber on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a seat, and a candlestick.* There are few khans, or inns, in Palestine even to-day, and these are only places which afford the traveler shelter but neither bedding nor food. The "prophet's chamber" must have been very welcome to Elisha. It was built on the flat roof of the house and had its own stone steps leading up the outside wall of the house or along the wall of the court. Such guest chambers are common now, especially in Jerusalem and Nablus (ancient Shechem).

Oriental House with Upper Chamber

27. *She caught hold of his feet.* Even then he did not address her. So downtrodden was the position of women in the East that any dignified person, much more a great prophet, could not converse with a woman without compromising his dignity. The more scrupulous Pharisees in the days of Christ always carefully gathered up their garments in the streets, lest they should so much as touch a woman with their skirts in passing by, as the modern Chakams in Jerusalem do to this day. The disciples themselves, sophisticated by familiarity with such teachers, were astonished that Jesus at the well of Shechem should talk with a woman. *F. W. Farrar,* in *Expositor's Bible.*

22. *Send me one of the servants and one of the asses.* - "Ladies of the high class in the East seldom walk, but almost always ride on asses. The rider is attended by a servant who runs behind, and, with a whip or stick, drives or goads the animal forward at whatever pace may be desired." The ass of Damascus is more valuable than the ordinary horse, and travels rapidly.

23. *It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.* The new moon was especially a woman's holiday, and was so observed even in the Middle Ages, for the women refrained from doing work on that day. The explanation given by the rabbis is that when the men broke off their golden earrings to supply material for the golden calf the women refused to contribute their trinkets, for which good behavior a special day of repose was granted to them. *Professor Schechter, Studies.*

26, 27. *It is well. She caught hold of his feet.* This scene is natural and very graphic. If you ask after a person whom you know to be sick, the reply at first will invariably be, Well, thank God, even when the very next sentence is to inform you that he is dying. Then the falling down, clasping the feet, etc., are actions witnessed every day. I have had this done to me often before I could prevent it. *Thomson, The Land and the Book.*

29. *Take my staff.* The walking staff that every traveler used to help him on his way. *Salute him not.* He must not take the time for lengthy salutations then and now customary in the East. Orientals have no idea of the value of time. They are not content on meeting to exchange a word of greeting, but they utter many repetitions to the accompaniment of tedious bowing and posturing. Canon Tristram in *Eastern Customs in Bible Lands,* describes the scene:

You may be hurrying to your pre-arranged camping ground or village, and the sun is rapidly nearing the western horizon. Your dragoman recognizes a traveller whom you meet, or, it may be, accosts an entire stranger. The greeting commences by a reciprocal invocation of peace. Both halt. The conversation proceeds in a series of meaningless inquiries after health, welfare

of all the kinsfolk. Then it gradually slides into inquiries as to whence each started in the morning, and their destination for the night, with ejaculations of "Allah be praised!" and the like, after each reply. You impatiently sit on your horse a few yards in advance, but you turn, and see them composing themselves to sit down on the wayside, while they interchange all the small gossip of their respective villages, and the various rumors of the bazaars, in which employment ten minutes is easily wasted. And the sun is setting ere your loitering guide comes up to you again.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Canon Farrar's introductory paragraph to the record of Elisha may well be quoted here: At this point we enter into the cycle of supernatural stories which gather round the name of Elisha in the prophetic communities. Some of them are full of charm and tenderness; but in some cases it is difficult to point out their intrinsic superiority over the ecclesiastical miracles with which monkish historians have embellished the lives of their saints. We can but narrate them as they stand, for we possess none of the means for critical or historical analysis which might enable us to discriminate between essential facts and accidental elements.

The first recorded act of Elijah was the announcement of the coming drought: the first act of Elisha was the giving of pure water to the people of Jericho, and "Elisha's fountain" is still pouring forth sweet water.

On the way to Bethel rude lads mocked Elisha, saying, "Go up, thou baldhead." His short hair or shorn head was in striking contrast to Elijah's long, shaggy locks. They met swift retribution, for many of them were killed by two bears who came out of the near-by woods.

In the wilderness of Edom the armies of the kings of Israel, Judah, and of Edom, who had united their forces to fight the king of Moab, were in distress for want of water. Jehoshaphat appealed to Elisha, who obtained water for them in abundance and prophesied their victory.

The two sons of a widow of one of the prophets were to be sold for debt. Elisha bade her procure all the vessels she could and fill them from the one jar of oil in her possession: the oil lasted till all the vessels were filled, and its sale freed her from debt.

"It fell on a day," is the way in which our story of the restoration of the Shunammite's son begins. Places are given, but dates are wanting, for any accurate chronological arrangement of events in Elisha's life.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Elisha seems to have made his home in Samaria, and to have traveled during his ministry of half a century around the neighboring country. He was on Mount Carmel when the Shunammite sought him. See p. 100.

There was a Shunem on the southern slope of Little Hermon, in the Plain of Esdraelon. See the diagram, p. 91. It is famous as the home of the maiden who is the heroine of the Song of Songs, and was the place occupied by the Philistines before the battle of Gilboa when king Saul lost his life. Perhaps the Shunem of our lesson was between Samaria and Carmel.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Every child is keenly interested in stories of child-life. Your pupils will feel the touch of kinship in the account of the little boy who was sunstruck and was restored. Tell them the whole story, beginning with the time when the prophet Elisha often passed by the home of the rich woman in Shunem. She knew by his kind and noble face that he was "a holy man of God," and she had a room built for his use. Draw on the blackboard her house and add the upper room and outside stairway that were built for Elisha. Elisha was grateful and wished to do something for her in return. He learned that she had no little child, he prayed to God and a little baby boy came to make her happy. Picture the harvest scene, the father and the reapers, the hot sun, the merry

little boy suddenly taken sick. Ask your pupils whom they want to have take care of them when they are sick. Tell them of the child in the hospital who hearing the doctor say to the nurse, "I don't see what is the matter with her," said to him. "I want a big dose of mother." This sick lad in the harvest field at Shunem was hurried to his mother. She held him and cared for him all the morning, but at noon he died in her arms. She believed that the prophet Elisha could bring him back to life.

Finish the story. Teach the lesson of the second topic. Tell the two stories there given about children.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils.

There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fire-side, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.

Do you know who wrote these lines? Sooner or later Longfellow's words come true in every household. They were true of a beautiful home in Samaria in the days of the prophet Elisha.

For Older Pupils. Elisha received the double portion of the elder son, and was a not unworthy successor of Elijah, but he did not receive the entire inheritance. He can not be called great in the sense that Elijah was called great, and he left no such enduring impression on the memory of succeeding generations as did Elijah. His gentler nature seems the still small voice where Elijah was the hurricane and earthquake and fire. Elijah, strong and stern and uncompromising, was needed to recall the king and people to the worship of the true God; but Elisha, kindly and helpful and patient, was needed to sustain them in the troublesome times that followed, when the Syrians came down like wolves on the fold. Elijah was the austere man of the wilderness; Elisha was the son of a prosperous farmer. Elijah lived aloof from the people; Elisha was one of them. Elijah was always in opposition to king and people; Elisha was their friendly counselor. Elijah was full of fiery zeal for the Lord; Elisha was the man of faith and vision, the holy man of God.

Many miracles are ascribed to Elisha, some of them unlike most of the miracles recorded in the Bible. In truth, almost all we know about him is told in a succession of miraculous deeds of beneficence. Why should it not be true, questions Dr. Maclaren, that after Elijah had proclaimed the truth, his successor's function was to enforce it chiefly by his acts, and to seek to draw Israel back to God by "the cords of love" and the gentle compulsion of mercies?

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Miracle that Failed

Absent Treatment. "Why don't you have machinery to do that?" a visitor questioned a potter who was shaping the clay with his hands. "We have tried all kinds of machinery, and failed," the old man replied; "somehow it needs the human touch."

What Elisha's thought was when he tried to work a miracle with machinery we cannot tell. When he told Gehazi to take his staff and go and see what he could do with it, he was trying an experiment. Gehazi returned and told him that the child was not awaked, and the prophet apparently was not surprised. The Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me, he had said in regard to the cause of the mother's grief: the way in which he was to help her was also hid from him at the time. Prophets were not inspired at all times. He seems to have thought that possibly there might be power in the staff and Gehazi might work a miracle with it as he had done when he struck the waters of the Jordan with the mantle of Elijah. He was not sure the experiment would work, and so he followed himself. He learned that life could not be restored by machinery; it required the touch of the human hand.

Doing Good only by Means of Others. Many send their servant as the

prophet sent Gehazi, to heal some element evil by the aid of their staff; by the help of something that is useful to them, but not indispensable; something that belongs to them, but is not a part of themselves; something that they can spare without inconvenience. The staff that they use represents their money, their help, whatever shape it assumes; and their Gehazi is the missionary or minister, the society or collector, whom they use in distributing their help. Thus they themselves never come into contact with the evil they seek to redress; they never see the objects of their charity; they have no personal interest in them, no sympathy of heart and soul with them as brothers and sisters sharing the same human nature. And acting in this impersonal way, having our good deeds done for us by proxies and substitutes; subjecting ourselves to no real sacrifice, no pain or trouble or inconvenience; sending our alms by the hands of a servant who may turn out to be as covetous, hard and careless of the interests of those for whom he acts and to whom he ministers help as Gehazi, doing the work only for the sake of the reputation or the substantial loaves and fishes connected with it—we need not wonder that so many of our efforts to remove the evil of the world should be so unsuccessful. *Hugh Macmillan,* in *The Olive Leaf.*

The Personal Touch is needed in all Work for Others. We read that Jesus took the lame man by the hand, that He touched the sightless eyes, that He ate with the publicans and sinners, and we know that He did these things because He was moved with compassion for them. That sort of compassion is sorely needed to-day.

"Perfunctory charity" is cleverly pictured by *Punch* in an account of a district visitor's experience. She was evidently new to the business and somewhat embarrassed. The cottager instructed her.

"I'm quite well, thank you miss, but I ain't seed you afore. Y're fresh at it ain't yer, miss?"

"I have never visited you before, Mrs. Johnson."

The woman dusted a chair. "Well," she says, "Yer sits down here, an' yer reads me a short Psalm, yer gives me a shillin' an' then yer goes!"

Well does Dr. Van Dyke say that "Charity is broader and better organized to-day than it ever was before; but if the personal impulse, the personal aim, the personal touch goes out of it, the world will suffer more than it gains."

II Prayer and Effort

Prayer is not a Substitute for Effort. Elisha's first act was to shut the door and pray to God for power to restore the dead boy to life. Then we are told how he put his mouth upon the child's mouth, hands upon his hands, until the child's flesh began to grow warm. He walked to and fro, doubtless to regain the heat which had been chilled by the cold body of the child, and repeated the process. Why this was necessary we can not tell, but the lesson of it all is plain. Prayer for God's help must be seconded by effort within one's own power to fulfil that prayer. God uses people to carry out His plans.

Far too many older children seem to think they need only to ask God to do this or that and then may sit by and watch Him do it. They are like the little girl who fell down and lay calmly waiting, she said, for God to come and pick her up; she had "pwayed Him to do it, and he didn't answer very quick." God does not work miracles for those who pray but do not do their part toward accomplishing their prayer. What an example Paul is of this truth that effort must accompany prayer! He always prayed for divine help, and believed that God was with him and working through him, but he never failed to do his utmost in whatever emergency he was placed.

When President Lincoln was told about the childlike faith and fervent prayers of John Albion Andrew, the "War Governor" of Massachusetts, he remarked: "When we have the Governor of Massachusetts to send us troops in the way he has, and when we have him to utter such prayers for us, I have no doubt that we shall succeed." The answer comes to prayers that are accompanied by troops.

Helping God. It was a mean thing for Charlie to do—a mean, selfish, unfair thing. Rosamond's small soul was darkened with the injustice of it, and her eyes flashed angrily. Then, to the interest of the friend who was watching

the conflict—so small to an onlooker, so large to the children themselves—Rosamond turned and ran away, her hand over her mouth.

"What made you run away, dear?" the watcher asked.

"Oh," the child answered earnestly, "I had to help God make me good. So I runned away before I could answer back."

Do we, of wiser years, always so well remember our part in the great world conflict? *Forward.*

What Some People Think.

Some people think prayer is an elevator,
A sort of an automatic waiter,
Eternally ready, supernally swift,
To pick them up and give them a lift,
Whenever they signal the Operator.
But maybe prayer is a road to use,
A mountain path leading towards the skies
To assist the spirit who truly tries. *Edmond Vance Cooke.*

III Missionary Topic Eternal Life through Jesus Christ

The Christian Hope. The story draws a curtain over that meeting in the prophet's chamber. Sad hearts who have vainly longed for such a moment, can fancy the rapture. But the day will come, not here, but in the upper chamber, when parted ones shall clasp each other again; and many a mourner shall hear Jesus say from the Throne what He once said from the Cross, "Woman, behold thy son, son, behold thy mother." *Alexander Maclaren, The Second Book of Kings.*

Heathen Longing. Mr. Egerton Young in "By Canoe and Dog Train," tells how he aroused some Indians who lived sixty miles from Beaver Lake and made them interested in hearing about eternal life. "The Indians sat shrouded in their blankets, smoking in a sullen indifference, upright and motionless as mummies. Tired out in mind and body and sad at heart, I threw myself upon the help of God, and breathed a prayer for guidance in this hour of sore perplexity. God heard me, and, springing up, I shouted, 'I know where all your children are, all your dead children!' At the word the Indians uncovered their faces and manifested intense interest. Then a big stalwart man sprang up and rushed towards me. 'Missionary, my heart is empty, and I mourn much, for none of my children are left among the living; very lonely is my wigwam.'"

Heathen Despair. A funeral procession was on its way to the foreign cemetery in a Korean city. "Who is it?" asked one Korean of another. "The missionary's son," was the answer. "That is very, very sad." "It is not so bad for them as for us," the second woman commented. "They know something that makes them sure that they will get their children back some day. We know nothing about how to get ours back again."

In the ruins of an old house in Salonika (Paul's Thessalonica) two funeral urns were found. The inscription on one was, "No Hope," on the other, "Christ my Life." The one was pagan; the other was Christian.

SENTENCE SERMONS

Pray, but swing your hammer. *Spanish Proverb.*

In the battle of life we cannot hire a substitute. *Harold Bell Wright.*

We may do nothing without praying, yet we must do many things besides praying. *William Burkett.*

It may be that our prayers are not effective because we have been asking God to do His part and ours too. *L. G. Broughton.*

There is no good in praying for anything unless you will also try for it. *Henry van Dyke.*

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. Jn. 6.47.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

The husband was astonished that his wife wished to see the prophet when it was "neither new moon nor sabbath," that is, not the special time for worship. Like him are those who think religion is only for Sunday.

Very thoughtful and sympathetic was the prophet when he saw the Shunammite coming. Something was wrong, he instinctively felt, and he hurried his servant on to meet her. The true heart is always eager to show sympathy and offer help if possible to those in trouble.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

A wealthy woman in Shunem showed great kindness to Elisha. Her home was always open for him when he passed that way, and she induced her husband to build a guest chamber for his use. What could he do in return—speak for her at court? he asked her through Gehazi, his servant; she lived with her own people, needed no such favor, was her reply. Gehazi told Elisha that she had no son, and Elisha prophesied that one would be given her. As Elisha foretold, so it came to pass.

One day at harvest time the lad was with his father and the reapers when he suddenly complained that his head hurt him. His father sent him at once to his mother, but he lived only a few hours. She laid him on the prophet's bed, and without telling her husband of his death, asked for an ass and a servant to go with her to see the prophet at Mount Carmel. He only could help now, she thought. Elisha saw her coming in the distance, and his quick intuition told him that something was wrong. He sent Gehazi to inquire, but she would not tell her grief to him. She hurried on to Elisha and threw herself at his feet, exclaiming in her grief, Did I desire a son of my lord? Then Elisha knew that she had lost her boy. He bade Gehazi hasten and lay his staff on the face of the dead child, but the mother would not trust to such measures and the prophet followed with her. Gehazi came back and told them his effort had been useless.

When he reached the house Elisha shut the door and prayed. Then he went to the upper room where the dead boy lay, and made strenuous exertions to restore him to life, stretching himself upon his body, walking to and fro, and repeating the effort. At last the child opened his eyes. His mother was called, and in gratitude too deep for words she bowed herself to the ground before the prophet, then took up her son and went out.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The staff in Gehazi's hands and "relics" in the Roman Catholic Church. 2. The Lord hath hid it from me: the answer to innumerable questions in regard to the meaning of Scripture. 3. No other can do your work.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What have you learned about Ahab? (Lessons IV, VI VII, IX.) 2. Who had made the same assertion as Benhadad in verse 10? (Lesson VIII.) 3. What do the words mean? 4. What Hebrew king had made a futile boast of what he would do? (Lesson I.) 5. What is said about boasting in Prov. 27.1? Commit the verse to memory. 6. What did Paul say in his second letter to Timothy, 4.6-8, about what he had done? Why was he not boasting? 7. How did Ahab meet his death? (1 K. 22.) 8. Tell the story of Curtius (Clipping, p. 144.) 9. Tell how Hefferon lost the Marathon race (Clipping, p. 143.) 10. Tell how Russel Sage taught a young man some valuable lessons (Clipping, p. 145.) 11. What history is covered by First Kings?

Questions to think about. 1. Why did Ahab agree to Benhadad's first terms and then refuse his final terms? 2. What did Benhadad mean by his boast? 3. What did Ahab mean by his retort?

Note-Book Work. 1. In your Book of the Prophets begin a Life of Elisha. Write Scene I, The Call of Elisha, and his Last Journey with Elijah; Scene II, Elisha healing the Waters of Jericho and mocked by Children; Scene III, Elisha and the Widow's Oil; and Scene IV, Elisha restoring a Child to Life.

LESSON XII—MARCH 19

DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS

(Temperance Lesson)

Golden Text

It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink. Prov. 31.4.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 20.12-21. Defeat through Drunkenness. **T.** Prov. 31.1-9. It is not for Kings to Drink Wine. **W.** Isaiah 5.1-23. The Drunkards Go into Captivity. **T.** Isaiah 28.1-14. Staggering with Strong Drink. **F.** Hos. 4.6-19. Wine and New Wine Take away the Heart. **S.** Amos 2.6-16 Giving the Nazarites Wine to Drink. **S.** Amos 6.1-6. The People that Drink Wine in Bowls. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 1 Kings 20.12-21 COMMIT v. 13

12 And it came to pass, when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array.* And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

13 And, behold, a prophet came near unto Ahab king of Israel, and said, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thy hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah. 14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith Jehovah, By the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered, Thou. 15 Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. 17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out and they told him, saying, There are men come out from Samaria. 18 And he said, Whether they are come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they are come out for war, take them alive. 19 So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them. 20 And they slew every one his man; and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with horsemen. 21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *Ben-hadad.* Ben-hadad II, the son of Ben-hadad I, whom Asa caused to wage war against the king of Israel, 1 K. 15.18-20.—*Thirty and two kings.* Vassal princes.

3. *Even the goodliest are mine.* If Ahab would surrender as hostages "the flower of the land," Benhadad would depart.

5. *The messengers came again and said.* Ben-hadad thought he had not demanded enough from so compliant an enemy.

6. *Whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes. All the desire of thine eyes,* RVm. All that you hold valuable. The city should be given over to pillage.

10. *The gods do so unto me, and more so.* See p. 108.—*If the dust of Samaria...follow me.* "He seeks by boasting in genuine oriental style, to overcome Ahab; the import of his words is, my army is so large that if, in the impending desolation of Samaria, every one of my people desired to take away with him only a handful of rubbish, many would have to go back empty handed" (*Lange*).

12. *As he was drinking, he and the kings.* Confident of victory, Ben-hadad was giving a banquet to the princes with him, verse 1.—*Pavilions.* Or, *huts,* RVm. The temporary booths. Our word *pavilion* is derived from the Latin *papilio,* butterfly, because of the fancied resemblance between a pitched tent and a butterfly with outstretched wings.—*Set yourselves in array.* Or, *place the engines,* RVm. In order to make ready for the attack.

13. *A prophet.* We have no further knowledge about him.

14. *The young men of the princes of the provinces.* "Servants of the Israelite chiefs who had been driven by the Syrian invasion from the provinces into the capital."

15. *Seven thousand.* "It was to be made clear that this was a victory due to the intervention of God, and not won by the power nor the might of man" (*Farrar*).

16. *At noon.* The beseigers would be resting in the heat of the day.

18. *Take them alive.* Ben-hadad doubted not they could be taken without fighting.

20. *The Syrians fled.* At the first attack.

21. *The king of Israel went out and smote the horses and chariots.* He and those with him must have pursued upon the horses their enemy had abandoned in their flight.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

6. *Whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall take it away.* Such a demand indicates how low Israel had sunk. The Syrian monarch presumed on the cowardice that moral degeneracy always begets. There are no hours so full of temptation as those which come to us after our refusal to obey some high appeal, like that which came to Ahab and his people from Carmel. Ahab's answer was better than we might have expected from such a man (11); but it would have amounted to little more than a stalwart boast had there not been other influences at work on the behalf of the chosen people. It may be that throughout this crisis ceaseless prayer was being offered in the schools of the prophets. *F. B. Meyer,* in *The Christian.*

13. *Thou shalt know that I am Jehovah.* In this declaration we have specified the purpose of the entire narrative, and at the same time the standpoint from which it is to be comprehended. The attack of the Syrian king, who had grown so mighty, threatened Ahab and his kingdom with destruction; at this crisis God, who never forsakes His people, repeatedly grants them the victory, which was so extraordinary and wonderful, that it could not possibly be ascribed to human power and strength, but only to God. It was designed to make king and people unmistakably certain that it is not Baal or any other god, but the God Jehovah who "doeth wonders, and declareth his strength among his people, and redeemeth his people with a strong arm." *Karl Bähr,* in *The Book of the Kings.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

11. *Girdeth on his armor.* The military girdle was a strong belt, designed to sustain the body, and at the same time to cover such portion of the abdomen as might be unprotected by the cuirass. Some girdles, indeed, seem to have been a constituent part of the cuirass, intended to fasten it more firmly. Leather, iron, and bronze were used in their construction, and where rich ornament was required, silver and gold. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

To-day we turn from the stories of the prophets to those of the kings, and back in time to the days of Ahab, king of Israel. He was the son of Omri, who reigned twenty-two years, doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him (1 K. 16.30), for he built an altar to Baal in Samaria for his queen, Jezebel of Sidon. You recall how Elijah foretold the famine to Ahab, how Ahab sought the prophet in vain, how Ahab gathered the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel at Elijah's command and told Jezebel

afterwards about the result of the contest. It was probably after Elijah's flight to Horeb and the subsequent call of Elisha that Ben-hadad, King of Syria, besieged Samaria and the events of to-day's lesson occurred.

In the story of Elijah we have seen Ahab only as a weak man dominated by the powerful, unscrupulous Jezebel. Like all men, Ahab had more than one side. He was a king who possessed considerable statecraft and military prowess, and brought Israel to a high degree of prosperity.

Ahab and Ben-hadad met in the siege of Samaria and Ahab was victorious. They met the next year at Aphek, above the sea of Galilee on Syrian soil, and Ahab was again victorious. Ahab allowed Ben-hadad to escape on his promise to restore certain cities which his father had taken from Ahab's father, and Ahab was sternly censured for his leniency by one of the prophets. Probably his leniency was due to the threatening attitude of the Assyrians at this time. The Book of Kings does not record this, but we know from the Assyrian inscriptions that Ahab and Ben-hadad both sent forces to the aid of Hamath when it was attacked by Shalmaneser II, and they were defeated in the battle of Karkar, near the Orontes, in 854 B. C. Ben-hadad kept the city of Ramoth, in Gilead, probably one of the cities he had agreed to restore, and Ahab with the aid of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, attempted to regain it. Ahab met his death in the battle. His body was brought back to Samaria for burial, and the washing of his blood from his chariot by the entrance of the gateway was regarded as a fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy, 1 K. 21.19.

For Samaria, see p. 74.

Bas-Reliefs from the Black Obelisk, Representing Tribute Brought by Various Nations to Shalmaneser II. The Second Group from the Top Represents the Tribute of Jehu, "Son of Omri."

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Begin your talk with the fable of Curtius and the gulf in the Roman Forum, p. 144. It is a rule, you know, that the details of an illustration should be in inverse proportion to the culture of the hearers. An allusion which is sufficient for nimble, educated adult minds, would be lost on children. Children need to be impressed by having the story expanded into detailed description. Expand the fable of Curtius, giving the words of the people, the words of Curtius, and what was said about him after his heroic deed. Tell your pupils that this is only a story of "Once upon a time," but it has a meaning. Explain it. Then tell them that you have a true story for them of what happened long ago in the kingdom of Israel, which shows what young men can do with God's help. Review what your pupils have learned in earlier lessons about Ahab. Picture the two scenes; in the besieged city and in the camp of the enemy outside. After you have told the story, or have had your pupils tell it, talk about the Golden Text. Tell (more graphically) about the Boy and the Moth Millers, p. 146, and apply its thought to the every-day temptations of your pupils.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Is it easy to begin a contest well? Is it easy to end it well? If you have entered for a long race, what is it that you must fear will keep you from winning? A champion tennis-player has written a book on how to play that game and among the things that make for success is one which he calls "morale." He explains that term thus: "Morale implies, roughly speaking, the power of endurance when there is every external reason for not enduring." "Morale" is assuredly a prime factor in any contest.

You may begin well, but if you have it not you will not end well. Is it ever sensible before the contest to boast that you will win? Did you ever hear another say, You crowed too soon?

There was a great king of Syria who was so confident of success in battle that he made a most extravagant boast. Who was the king and what was his boast?

For Older Pupils. In one of the great Marathon races a South African runner, Hefferon, came out second. He explained afterwards why he lost the race: "My misfortunes happened near home, two miles from which, to my great regret, I accepted a draught of champagne. It was a great mistake. I got a cramp a mile from the finish, and then lost my head."

"Two miles—and then the goal is won! Oh, surely there can rise
No evil chance in two short miles to snatch away the prize!
Will strength give way that holds thus far? Will such strong courage fail?
Ah, no. But in a race like this, are strength and courage all?
There is temptation still to face—of all our foes the worst—
And see, the leader turns aside to slake his burning thirst.
He checks his pace thus near the goal; he takes the proffered wine:
Ah, those who drink a draught like that, the laurelled prize resign.
His limbs grow stiff. Yet on he toils, to hear with glance of dread
A rival's footsteps close behind: they reach him—pass ahead.
In sight of home! But all in vain! The cheers of welcome rise
When feet unchecked as his are checked, speed on to win the prize."

Three thousand years earlier, in round numbers, a Syrian king was "on the home stretch." He had nearly won a great victory when he turned aside from the goal in view to slake his thirst in the noonday heat. He, too, lost his head completely. It was a great mistake.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

1 Boasting

Singing of Triumph before the Victory. You remember how when Rehoboam succeeded to the throne of Solomon his father the people asked to have their burdens lightened. Rehoboam was just girding on his armor, but he was confident as though he were taking it off, the battle won. With arrogant words he told the people how he would increase their burdens—the ten northern tribes rebelled and he lost the greater part of his kingdom.

Ben-hadad, king of Syria, had doubtless been successful in several battles before he carried the contest into the enemy's land and besieged Samaria, its capital. He was so overconfident that he made a most extravagant boast: "the dust of Samaria shall not suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me." He saw the beautiful capital in ruins, and his victorious army in possession. "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off," warned king Ahab. Samaria was not yet a heap of rubbish. So sure was Ben-hadad of success that he and his allies spent their time in drunken revelry, and when he learned that Ahab's forces had made a sally he ordered his men to take them alive, which he thought would be a simple thing to do. Instead, the Syrians were put to flight with great slaughter, and the king barely escaped with his life.

Sing not of triumph before victory, says the Latin proverb; Do not sell the bear's skin before you have the bear, says the German; Praise a fair day at night, says the English. It is only when the contest is over that victory is assured.

Red Cloud was an able Indian chief. On one occasion a number of men came from Washington to make a treaty with him. One of them was a great braggart, and he made a long speech in which he used big words, and promised great things that he and the government would do for the Indians if they agreed to the terms of the treaty. Red Cloud listened in silence, and when the speech was over he arose and uttered his sentiments in one contemptuous

sentence: "Heap big wind, much dust, no rain." Aptly do his words apply to Ben-hadad's blustering threat.

In the Battle of Life. Life is meant to be one long conflict. The condidition under which we work in this world is that everything worth while has to be done at the cost of opposition and antagonism, and that no noble service or building is possible without brave, continuous conflict. Even upon the lower levels of life that is so. No man learns a science or a trade without having to fight for it. But high above these lower levels there is the one on which we are all called to walk, the high level of duty, and no man does what his conscience tells him or refrains from that which his conscience sternly forbids without having to fight for it. We are in the lists and compelled to draw the sword, and if we do not realize this, that all nobility, all greatness, all wisdom, all success, even of the lowest and most vulpine kind, are won by conflict, we shall never struggle for lower purposes, for bread and cheese, or wealth or fame, or love, or the like, with a comparatively light heart; but if there once has dawned upon a young soul the whole majestic sweep of possibilities in its opening life, then the battle assumes an aspect of solemnity and greatness that silences all boasting.

There is no room for boasting, but there is room for absolute confidence. You, young men and women, standing at the entrance of the amphitheatre where the gladiators fight, may dash into the arena with the most perfect confidence that you will come out with your shield preserved and your sword unbroken.

There is one way of doing it. "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world." That is not the boast of a man putting on the harness, but the calm utterance of the conquering Christ when He was putting it off. He has conquered that you may conquer. Distrust yourselves utterly, and trust Jesus Christ absolutely, and give yourselves to Him, to be His servants and soldiers till your lives' end. He was no self-righteous braggart, but a very rigid judge of himself, who, close by the headsman's block that ended his life, said: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." "Put on the whole armor of God," and when the time comes to put it off, you will have a peaceful assurance as far removed from despair as it is from boasting. Condensed from a chapter in *The Secret of Power,* by *Alexander Maclaren.*

II The Young Men's Crusade

By the Young Men. The prophet came to Ahab and said, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold I will deliver it into thy hand this day: and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah. And Ahab said, By whom? and he said, Thus saith Jehovah, By the young men.

It was to be a young man's crusade, as indeed it is to the young that our God commits all bold and valorous enterprises.

Young men bring good sight to the venture. Their eyes have not been sealed by Mammon, or Bacchus, or Belial. They can discriminate between the superficial and the essential. And, secondly, young men bring unslaked enthusiasm. Hope burns in their souls like a mighty fire. Optimism is their native and most congenial air. They feel that they can "jump over the moon." They "laugh at impossibilities, and cry, It shall be done!" And, thirdly, young men bring to a fight the spirit of comradeship and ready association. They have fewer angles than older people, and can more easily "make friends." And so our Lord commits His great ventures into the competent hands of the young.

Great Britain is even now calling upon the young men! If she is to be saved from the evils that oppress her, it must be by their consecrated chivalry. Let every young man put his hand to some grand and unpopular cause, and "see it through." *J. H. Jowett,* in *Sunday-School Chronicle.*

Throwing Themselves into the Breach. You all know the classic story of Curtius. In the middle of the Roman Forum there suddenly appeared a terrible chasm. So deep was it that the bottom could not be seen, and no amount of work spent in trying to fill it up made any impression. In despair the people consulted their priests and were told that the gulf would close when the most

precious thing in Rome was cast into its depths. They flung in their gold and silver and jewels, but the chasm yawned as wide as ever. At last a young man named Curtius said that Rome's most precious possession was her heroes, and clad in full armor, he rode into the Forum, put spurs to his horse, and leaped into the abyss. The sacrifice was accepted, and the gulf closed after him.

The fable teaches two truths. More precious than gold or silver are the youth of the land, and it is the youth upon whom the prosperity of the nation depends. They say in Germany that as the young men in the universities think to-day, so will the nation think to-morrow. The greater the opportunities of youth, the greater their responsibilities.

How young people can throw themselves into the breach and save the day was well shown in Denver when Judge Ben. B. Lindsey, "the children's friend," was re-elected Judge of the Juvenile Court. All the country knows what remarkable good he has accomplished in his office, but the Republicans refused to nominate him because they said he was a Democrat, the Democrats refused because they said he was a Democrat, the Socialists refused because the Prohibitionists had nominated him. He was nominated on an independent ticket, and two weeks before the election the young people of the Colorado Christian Endeavor Union said he should be elected and they went to work. On election day two hundred and eleven young people left their business and homes and volunteered for work at the polls. The result was that Judge Lindsey received the largest vote ever given for any office in that county. By whom were the children delivered into the hands of a righteous judge? By the young people, under the command of Jehovah.

III Defeat through Drunkenness

Temperance in the Army. The truth of our Golden Text is well shown in our story. The king who with his thirty-two princes drank themselves drunk in the pavilions quickly met their downfall in the battle that followed.

Among the British soldiers there is an organization known as the R. A. T. A., the Royal Army Temperance Association. Recently the Association had their annual meeting in London, and all ranks were there, from the private to the Field Marshal. A correspondent sent a report to the *Sunday-School Chronicle*, in which he gave this interesting incident: The chairman of the meeting was General Sir Ian Hamilton, who was spoken of as "a jolly good fellow" by several of the soldiers with whom I chatted before the meeting—but "not exactly a teetotaler." Indeed, the General in his speech confessed that no less than 10,000 quarts of dutiable liquor had passed down his throat! and he told the meeting the story of his experience at an officer's dinner in the year 1873. At the end of the banquet he was sent to the hospital to fetch the doctors to attend to eight stalwart officers "who were laid out on the veranda like corpses after a battle," through excessive drinking. But the doctors, added Sir Ian, had also been at the banquet, and their services were not available!

"But drinking is dying out in the Army," said the General: "Shall we let it slowly die? Surely not! Has not the great Napoleon taught us that when we see an enemy slacken that is the moment to close in upon him and smite him hip and thigh?"

By this time the soldiers were rubbing their eyes. This was strange talk for an officer who himself was a drinker. The surprise came at the end of the speech. "Before I could speak to you on this subject," he said, "I had to put myself in a position to do so by signing the pledge." The cheers of the officers and men as they heard this statement were almost deafening, and they were renewed again and again as the speaker described the embarrassing situations in which in the future he would have to fight the battle against social custom.

Temperance in Business. The *Philadelphia Bulletin* contained one day an interesting report of a meeting of the University Club, from which this story told by a prosperous merchant is taken.

My first years in New York were not successful ones. I came down from the upper part of the State, determined to get along, but somehow, after a brief

experience of city life, I became discouraged and lax. There were no positions but clerkships to be gotten, and to work my way up to the top from an army of young clerks, all as efficient as myself, seemed hopeless. At twenty-five, I was making only four dollars a week more than when I started, and I hadn't a cent to my credit in the bank.

One day, scared and desperate about my future, I called to see Russell Sage. Sage came from my part of the country, and he had known my father well. He listened to my narrative with kindly interest. "Do you drink?" he said.

"Yes sir; moderately," said I. "But only very moderately."

"Well, stop it for a year. Then come to see me again," said Mr. Sage.

I stopped drinking for a year, and at the end I paid my second visit to the millionaire. He remembered all about me. He chatted a little while. Then he said: "Do you gamble?"

"Yes," I said, "I sometimes gamble."

"Well, give gambling up for a year and then come to see me."

So I stopped gambling, and the year went by, and for the third time I appeared in Mr. Sage's office. "Do you smoke?" he said, after we had had a third discussion of my affairs.

"Yes, sir," said I.

"Stop smoking," said he, "Come back after you have stopped smoking for a year."

The speaker laughed. One of his auditor's said impatiently: "Well, when you went back what happened?"

"I never went back," was the reply, the speaker's eyes were twinkling humorously. Because if I had, Mr. Sage would only have told me that now I had given up drinking and gambling and smoking, I must have saved enough money to start myself in business. It was true; I had saved enough money to start myself in business. That shrewd wise man had set me, almost without my knowing it, on the road to success.

The Boy and the Moth Millers. The boy watched the moth millers flutter around the lamp. Many of them would fly against the hot chimney and fall to the table, scorched and burned. Some of them would fly directly into the chimney and these would drop into the flame and be consumed, or lie half burned next to the blaze. Occasionally a moth would fall to the table, overcome by the heat, but with enough life to keep its wings moving, and oftimes the dying moth would crawl towards the same light that had caused its suffering.

"How strange!" thought the boy. "Can't the moths see these scorched and wingless millers? Why will they rush into the flame and be destroyed? Here is a live miller unscorched. It has for the moment lit among the dead ones. There it goes! Ah! it falls with wings scorched and burned dead. I should think that if moth millers are able to discern the light they would have enough sense to discover the danger where so many are lying dead."

The boy even while wondering why moth millers were such foolish things answered a whistle that came to him through the open window, put on his cap and hastened out. He was soon on the street with other boys. He visited a pool room with them and looked on. He hung around a saloon. He looked through the open doorway as he heard a drunken brawl. A fight and arrest followed. Men with bloody faces were led away. He saw the once wealthy Mr. Jones reeling home after having spent his last cent for whiskey. He listened to the filthy stories and lying tales.

Ah, my boy, the wicked sin-scorched and habit-bound men you see have flown into the flame, or are beating out their lives against its destroying heat. Are you no wiser than moth millers? *World Book of Temperance.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Go into the fight bragging, and you will come out of it beaten. *Maclaren.*

Drinking makes thinking impossible: some day thinking will make drinking impossible. *Scottish Reformer.*

Be sober, for you are not there. *Keble.*

Boast not thyself of to-morrow;
For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Prov. 27.1.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Rejoice, O young men, in thy youth, and determine with divine help to use your strength and energy and enthusiasm in righteous causes.

If I am building a mountain, said Confucius, and stop before the last basketful of earth is placed on the summit, I have failed. The race is not won before the goal is reached. The plodding tortoise wins while the swift hare turns aside to rest. The young men "like two little flocks of kids" outfought the great Syrian army whose leaders had boasted of success and had turned aside to drink themselves drunk.

On the Enchanted Ground in Pilgrim's Progress there were brambles and thorn-bushes, deep slippery mud, mist and darkness, with here and there an inviting arbor with soft-cushioned chairs and couches. Travelers with shoes so heavily weighted with mud that progress could be made only with great effort, were tempted to turn aside and rest, but whoever went to sleep there never awoke, the guide told them. Life is a journey with hardships innumerable, and alluring are the temptations to give up the effort and enjoy one's ease. For some the inviting arbors are pavilions where one may drink himself drunk, for others they hold temptations of various kinds. Only they who withstood the alluring arbors in the Enchanted Ground reached the Beautiful City at last.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The Siege of Samaria, 1. II. Ben-hadad's Demands, 2-12. III. The Syrians defeated, 13-21.

Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, came with thirty-two vassal princes and a great army and besieged Samaria. He offered to raise the siege in return for money and hostages, and Ahab agreed. Then he demanded that the city should be surrendered for plunder and Ahab, after consulting with the elders, refused. Ben-hadad sent back a blustering boast—so great was his army, that the dust of the city, after it had fallen, would not suffice to give each of his followers a handful.

Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off, returned Ahab. Ben-hadad was drinking in the camp booths when this message was brought him and he ordered the army set in battle array.

Unto Ahab a prophet came and assured him that God would give him the victory. By whom? questioned the discouraged king. By the young men in attendance upon the princes of the provinces, replied the prophet. Who shall begin the battle? Ahab further questioned. Thy forces; the prophet replied. There were two hundred and thirty-two of these young men and seven thousand of all the people. What were they among so many!

The young men made a sally upon the besieged city at noon. Word was brought to Ben-hadad, but he and the princes were drinking themselves drunk, and so sure of success that he merely ordered the young men captured alive, whether they had come forth to capitulate or to fight. The Israelitish army followed, and the prophet's word was fulfilled; the Syrians fled, Ben-hadad barely made his escape, and with their abandoned horses and chariots Ahab and his troops pursued them with great slaughter.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The character of Ahab. 2. Syria's relation to Israel and Judah. 3. Eternal vigilance.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Israel continue your Life of Ahab by writing an account of the two Syrian wars and of the rebuke given Ahab.

(Assign whatever work is necessary to prepare for the review work you will take up next week.)

LESSON XIII—MARCH 26

REVIEW

Golden Text

Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord. Ps. 144.15.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1 Kings 12.1-24. The Kingdom Divided. 1 Kings 12:25—13.6. Jeroboam Makes Idols for Israel to Worship. **T.** 2 Chron. 15.1-15. Asa's Good Reign in Judah. 1 Kings 16.15-33. Omri and Ahab Lead Israel into Greater Sin. **W.** 2 Chron. 17.1-13. Jehoshaphat's Good Reign in Judah. 1 Kings 17.1-24. Elijah the Prophet Appears in Israel. **T.** 1 Kings 18.1, 2, 17-40. Elijah's Victory over the Prophets of Baal. 1 Kings 18.41; 19.21. Elijah's Flight and Return. **F.** 1 Kings 21.1-29. Elijah Meets Ahab in Naboth's Vineyard. 2 Kings 2.1-18. Elijah Goes up by a Whirlwind into Heaven. **S.** 2 Kings 4.8-37. Elisha the Prophet Restores a Child to Life. **S.** 1 Kings 20.12-21. Defeat through Drunkenness. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

A BRIEF REVIEW FROM THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM TO THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH

Outlines for the Blackboard

I Counsels, 6-11.
Choice, 12-15.
Catastrophe, 16.

II Inquietude, 25-27.
Idols, 28-30.
Incense, 31-33.

III Caution, 1-7.
Correction, 8.
Covenant, 9-15.

IV Samaria, 23-24.
Sinfulness, 25-28.
Shamelessness, 29-33.

V Probity, 1-6.
Preaching, 9.
Prosperity, 10-13.

VI Rain, 1.
Ravens, 2-7.
Renewal, 8-16.

VII Vanquished, 25-29.
Vigilant, 30-35.
Victorious, 36-39.

VIII Consternation, 1-4.
Communion, 5-14.
Commission, 15-16.

IX Plot, 11-14.
Profit, 15-16.
Punishment, 17-20.

X Partners, 1-8.
Petition, 9-10.
Parted, 11.

XI Shunammite, 25-28.
Staff, 29-31.
Saved, 32-37.

XII Drunk, 12-16.
Defied, 13-15.
Defeated, 16-21.

Lesson I. Solomon died and was succeeded by his son Rehoboam. A great assembly was held at Shechem, where the people appealed to Rehoboam to lessen the burdens put upon them by Solomon. The aged counselors advised the king to yield to their wishes, at least for a time, but the young men advised him to answer with insolent threats. Rehoboam followed the advice of the young men; the ten northern tribes at once withdrew and made Jeroboam their king, only the tribe of Judah remaining loyal to Rehoboam.

Lesson II. Jeroboam feared that if his people continued to go to Jerusalem to worship they would desert him for Rehoboam, and therefore he appointed Dan in the north and Bethel in the south as places of worship, setting up in each a golden calf. In this way he caused Israel to sin. He also chose priests from other tribes than that of Levi, changed the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, and himself offered burnt incense on the altar.

Lesson III. In the southern kingdom after the death of Rehoboam his

son Abijah was made king. After a brief reign Abijah died and his son Asa ascended the throne. Asa had a long and at first very good and prosperous reign, for he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He abolished idol worship and restored the worship of the temple. In a war with Zerah the Ethiopian he was victorious, and on his return sacrificed the spoil taken at a great assembly of the people at Jerusalem. Azariah the prophet had met him on his return and exhorted him to be true to the Lord. At this assembly the people all joyfully pledged obedience to the God of their fathers. In Asa's last years he was rebuked by the prophet Hanani for the lack of trust in Jehovah, for when Baasha, king of Israel, approached Jerusalem as near as Ramah and fortfied it, Asa called Ben-hadad the king of Syria to his aid.

Lesson IV. Two kings of the Northern Kingdom were Omri and Ahab. Omri is noted for his wise choice of the hill Samaria for his capital, but still more for his sin of idolatry. His son Ahab married Jezebel the daughter of the king of Sidon, who worshipped the god Baal, and then he established the worship of Baal in his own capital.

Lesson V. While Ahab was king of Israel Jehoshaphat followed his father Asa as king of Judah. He was one of the best of Judah's kings. Not only did he himself obey God's commandments but he abolished idolatrous places of worship and sent out teachers with the book of the law to teach in all the cities of Judah. He prospered greatly, having abundance both of riches and honor. He made peace with Israel and helped Ahab in his wars. His second great reform measure was the appointing of judges in the cities and a court of appeals at Jerusalem. His reign lasted twenty-five years.

Lesson VI. In the Northern Kingdom Baal was worshipped at court by the great mass of the people, and Queen Jezebel attempted to put to death all the prophets of God. The prophet Elijah boldly declared to King Ahab that the kingdom should be punished by a drought which would last till his word ended it. Then he escaped the king's wrath by fleeing to the brook Cherith, where food brought by ravens and water from the brook sustained him. The brook dried up and he went northward to Zarephath in Phœnicia, where he met a widow who was gathering sticks to bake her last morsel of bread. He asked to be first fed, assuring her that her jar of meal and cruse of oil would not fail. She obeyed, and his promise was fulfilled.

Lesson VII. When the time came that God would send rain, Elijah appeared again to Ahab and bade him assemble the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. There he asked the people to choose between God and Baal. A grand contest was held, the prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice and all day long called in vain on their god to hear their cries. Elijah made his offering ready, even deluged it with water, and then besought the Lord to let the people know that He is the true God. Fire fell and consumed altar and sacrifice, and the people acknowledged that the Lord is God. The long-looked-for rain came in torrents.

Lesson VIII. Ahab told Jezebel about the contest and how Elijah had put to death the prophets of Baal. Jezebel sent word to Elijah that she would kill him, and he fled to Beersheba and then into the wilderness. Seeking the shade of the juniper-tree the discouraged prophet there prayed that he might die. After being strengthened by sleep and food, he journeyed on to Mount Horeb and lodged in a cave. To the question that came to him, What doest thou here, Elijah? he answered that though his zeal for God's cause had been great the people had forsaken God and he, the only faithful one, was in danger of his life. After a mighty tempest, terrible earthquake and raging fire, symbols of God's power, Elijah heard a still, small voice. Question and answer were repeated, and then Elijah was told to go back to his work, to anoint Hazael king of Syria, Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet, for the cause for which he was so jealous would be continued by these men. And he was further encouraged by being told that there were seven thousand faithful worshippers of God in Israel. Elisha was at work plowing when Elijah threw over him his mantle in token that he, too, was to be a prophet. After a farewell feast Elisha followed Elijah.

Lesson IX. Ahab the King of Israel coveted a vineyard lying next to

his palace grounds at Jezreel, which Naboth, its owner, refused to sell. Like a spoiled child, the king threw himself on his couch, turned his face to the wall, and would not eat. Jezebel, his wife, learned the trouble. "Do you call yourself a king?" she scornfully asked. If he was weak, she, at least, was strong; she would get the vineyard. Jezebel formed a plot for the murder of Naboth. He was accused of cursing God and the king and was stoned to death. Ahab went to take possession of the vineyard and was met by Elijah, who denounced the crime, and declared that retribution would come in their violent deaths and in the destruction of their entire family.

Lesson X. When Elijah knew that God would take him from earth he started on his last journey with Elisha. They visited the schools of the prophets at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho, and at each place Elijah tried to have Elisha stay and let him go on alone, but Elisha's love for Elijah would not let him leave him. The prophets realized that their Master was about to be taken from them, but Elisha would not permit them to speak about it to him. They reached the other side of the Jordan, and Elijah said to his companion, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken from thee." "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me," returned Elisha. If he saw his departure, Elijah told him, he would know that his wish was granted. A whirlwind came upon them and chariots and horses of fire appeared to part them—and Elijah was not, for God took him. Sadly Elisha took up Elijah's mantle, smote the Jordan with it as Elijah had done when they crossed over, and returned to the waiting prophets on the other side, who exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha."

Lesson XI. Elisha was often entertained at the home of a wealthy woman of Shunem who had an upper room built for his use. The grateful prophet wished to do something for her in return and foretold that her great desire for a son would be granted. Several years after the birth of the boy he was sunstruck while in the field with the reapers. He was sent to his mother, and died in her arms. Putting him on the prophet's bed she hastened to Mount Carmel to seek Elisha's aid. Elisha directed Gehazi, his servant, to go with all speed and lay his staff upon the dead child. The mother would not leave Elisha, and he returned with her. Gehazi's effort had been futile, but Elisha by prayer and effort restored the boy to his mother.

Lesson XII. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, made war against Ahab, king of Israel, and laid siege to Samaria his capital. Ahab agreed to surrender when Ben-hadad demanded money and hostages, but refused when the Syrian king also required the giving over of the capital to pillage. Ben-hadad sent back a message of blustering bravado, and Ahab reminded him that the time to crow was after the battle, not before. A prophet assured Ahab that God would give him the victory through the young men. There were only two hundred and thirty-one young men and seven thousand people in all, but they made the attack. Ben-hadad and his allies were drinking themselves drunk when word came that some young men were coming out of the city towards them. "Take them alive," said the king, and continued his drinking. The young men were followed by the army, they put the Syrians and Ben-hadad to flight, pursued them in their abandoned chariots, and slew them in great numbers.

A REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

A Blackboard Review. Let the superintendent or leader call from twelve classes, appointed the week before, a sentence from each lesson that refers to the Golden Text for the Quarter—Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. After writing the sentence on the board ask for the chief persons and chief facts of that lesson.

Sentences

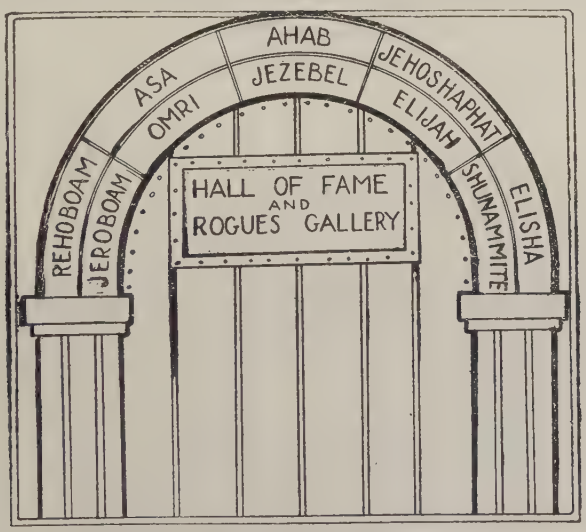
I. It was a thing brought about of the Lord.
II. He made two calves of gold and said, Behold thy gods, O Israel.
III. They entered into a covenant to seek Jehovah the Lord.
IV. Ahab reared up an altar for Baal.
V. Jehoshaphat's heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord.

VI. The Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand.
VII. The Lord, he is God.
VIII. I have been very jealous for the Lord.
IX. Thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord.
X. The Lord would take up Elijah into heaven.
XI. I perceive that this is a holy man of God.
XII. Thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

	Chief Persons	Chief Facts
I.	Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Ten Tribes, Tribe of Judah, Aged Counselors, Young Counselors.	A Great Crisis.
II.	Jeroboam and his People.	A Great Sin.
III.	Ahaziah, Asa.	A Great Reform.
IV.	Omri, Ahab, Jezebel.	A Great Idol.
V.	Jehoshaphat, Teachers, Philistines, Arabians.	A Great School.
VI.	Ahab, Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath.	A Great Miracle.
VII.	Ahab, Elijah, People, Prophets of Baal.	A Great Contest.
VIII.	Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, the Lord.	A Great Lesson
IX.	Naboth, Chief Elders and Nobles, Jezebel, Ahab, Elijah.	A Great Crime.
X.	Elijah, Elisha.	A Great Departure.
XI.	Gehazi, the Shunammite, Elisha, a Lad.	A Great Restoration.
XII.	Benhadad, Ahab, a Prophet, Young Men.	A Great Defeat.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

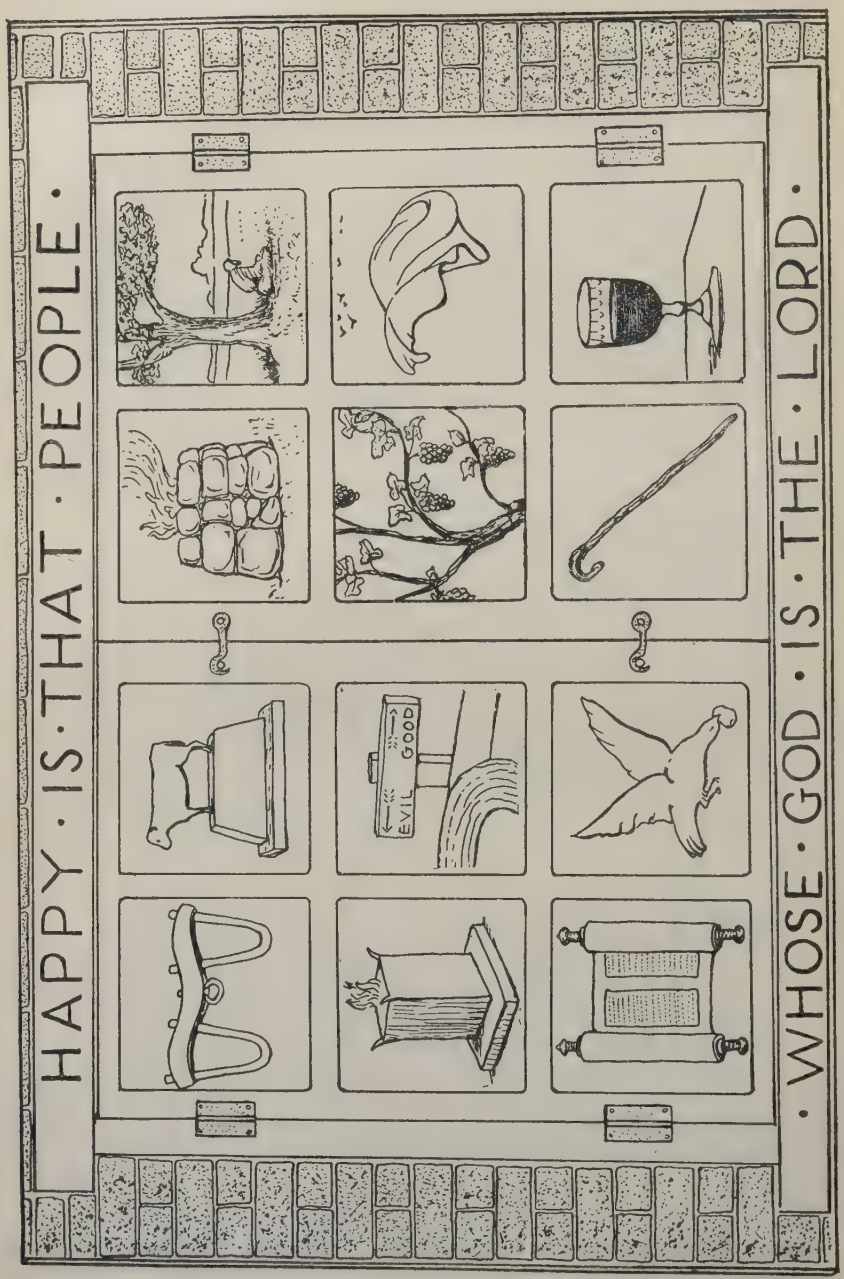
Have the outline of this diagram upon the blackboard and write each name



in the block as a five-minute talk is given upon that character by a pupil or some one else appointed the week before.

A REVIEW FOR LITTLE FOLKS

Have the pictures on the next page copied upon board or card-board, large enough to be easily seen by all your class. The figures of persons in this and in later Review lesson pictures can be cut from magazines and attached to the board with library paste. Each square should be covered with its own square of paper fastened on by pin or thumb tack. Remove one paper at a time and question your pupils about the lesson which the picture recalls.


HAPPY · IS · THAT · PEOPLE ·
· WHOSE · GOD · IS · THE · LORD ·
EVIL
GOOD

A REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

For what lesson of the Quarter would each of these verses be appropriate as Golden Texts?

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright;
For there is a happy end to the man of peace. Ps. 37.37.

Pride goeth before destruction
And a haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 16.18.

Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive;
He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up. 1 Sam. 2.6.

They tempted and rebelled against the Most High God
And kept not his testimonies. Ps. 78.56.

Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;
For therein do I delight. Ps. 119.35.

In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he will direct thy paths. Prov. 3.6.

Guard yourselves from idols. 1 Jn. 5.21.
He careth for you. 1 Pet. 5.7.
Trust in Jehovah, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on his faithfulness. Ps. 37.3.
Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine. Isa. 5.22.
Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain? Jer. 14.22.

The triumphing of the wicked is short,
And the joy of the godless but for a moment. Job. 20.5.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

Tell the lesson story suggested by the allusions in these selections. (For a written review, write several copies of each quotation on separate slips of paper and let your pupils each draw one. As soon as a pupil has told his story let him draw another. Announce the next Sunday the one who did the best.)

Major Childe, who was killed at Colenso, asked his brother officers to put on his grave this sentence: "It is well with the child; it is well."

(Tell your pupils that the editor of a paper in Newcastle, England, remarked about this request as follows: "The saying which Major Childe so pathetically used in punning allusion to his name is familiar enough. But whence is its origin? We fancy it as a legacy of one of the old Gaiety Theatre burlesques. The matter, however, is of sufficient historical importance to warrant being inquired into. The precise derivation of a saying which is now to be read over the grave of one of Britain's heroes ought to be established.")

Pour forth the oil, pour boldly forth,
It will not fail until
Thou failest vessels to provide
Which it freely fill.
Dig channels for the streams of love
Where they may boldy run;
And love has overflowing streams
To fill them every one. *R. C. Trench.*

Wind, earthquake, fire, were heralds of a voice,
A still, small voice, soft as the dew of grace,
And God was there, soothing his servant's weakness.
Richard Wilton.

For from Israel is even this; the workmen made it, and it is no god; Yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. Hosea 7.6.

Up Christians, leave your caves and do! *F. B. Meyer.*

O Tyre! in thy crowded streets
The phantom appears and retreats,
And the Israelites that sell
Thy lilies and lions of brass,
Look up as they see her pass,
And murmur, "Jezebel." *Longfellow.*

Not with their lips alone, but their hearts; and the Ave Maria
Sang they, and fell on their knees, and their souls with devotion translated,
Rose on the ardor of prayer, like Elijah, ascending to heaven. *Longfellow.*

All is clear to me now; I feel it, I see it distinctly!
This is the hand of the Lord; it is laid upon me in anger,
For I have followed too much the heart's desires and devices,
Worshipping Astaroth blindly, and impious idols of Baal.
This is the cross I must bear; the sin and and the swift retribution.
Longfellow.

"Lean not on Egypt's reeds; slake not thy thirst
At earthly cisterns, seek the kingdom first."

QUESTIONS FOR A WRITTEN REVIEW

For Younger Pupils. Write these questions upon separate slips of paper, as many of each as may be needed for your class. Let each pupil answer as many as he can in the time allowed.

1. Name the historical books of the Old Testament.
2. What history is covered by first Kings? Second Kings?
3. First Chronicles? Second Chronicles?
4. What kings of Israel have we studied about this Quarter? Of Judah?
5. Which ones were good kings? What good thing did they do?
6. What evil did the bad kings do?
7. What king and his son were both good kings of Judah?
8. What king and his son were both evil kings of Israel?
9. What happened on Mount Carmel?
10. What happened at Zarephath?
11. How do you know that Elijah was a man of prayer, of trust, of obedience?
12. What lesson teaches the evil of covetousness?
13. What lesson teaches that it is wrong to give way to discouragement?
14. What king of Syria was so confident of victory that he gave a banquet to his princes on the eve of battle?
15. What city was the capital of the southern kingdom?
16. What city was made the capital of the northern kingdom? In whose reign?
17. Draw a map of Palestine and locate the places mentioned in this quarter's lessons.

For Older Pupils.

1. Name the historical books of the Old Testament.
2. Who wrote the Books of Kings? What period does each book cover?
3. What is the different view-point of Kings and Chronicles?
4. Which book contains the annals of the Northern Kingdom?
5. How is the supremacy of Jehovah shown in each lesson of the Quarter?
6. Draw a map of Palestine and locate the places mentioned in this quarter's lessons.
7. What man believed in "the divine right of kings," and what befell him?
8. Why was the division of the Empire a great turning point in Hebrew history?

9. Tell about the size, strength and weakness of each kingdom.
10. Describe the religious reforms of a good king of Judah.
11. What two measures for the good of the people did Jehoshaphat institute?
12. Tell the best or the worst trait in each of the kings of the Quarter.
13. When and how was Elijah once the champion of pure religion?
14. When and how was Elijah the champion of justice?
15. Give a practical lesson that you have learned from each lesson.

SUBJECTS FOR WRITTEN WORK TO BE BROUGHT TO CLASS

For Younger Pupils.

1. Tell the story of a man who was so discouraged that he wanted to die, and the lesson he was taught.
2. Tell the story of a king who would not listen to the wise advice of others, and what happened.
3. An account of one evil king of Israel and one good king of Judah.
4. The story of a great contest.
5. The story of a king who was so afraid of losing his kingdom that he led his people to do evil.
6. The story of a man who wanted his own way, of a woman who helped him gain it, and the result.

For Older Scholars.

1. An account of the translation of Elijah and the ascension of Christ.
2. An account of the causes which led to the division of the Hebrew kingdom.
3. A connected history of the Kingdom of Israel from Jeroboam to Ahaziah.
4. A connected history of the Kingdom of Judah from Rehoboam to Jehoram.
5. A character sketch of Rehoboam and Jeroboam.
6. A parallel between Rehoboam and Charles I.
7. Moses and Elijah on Sinai.
8. Jezebel and Lady Macbeth.
9. Steadfast devotion illustrated by Elisha and by Ruth.
10. The end of Moses' and the end of Elijah's life.
11. The Books of Kings and Chronicles.
12. An account of some noted person who possessed one or more of the traits of Elijah.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Where is Damascus? 2. What great man was on his way to Damascus when he learned a wonderful lesson? 3. How did Peter learn that God is no respecter of persons? (Acts 10). 4. For what purpose did Jesus refer to the cure of Naaman? (Lk. 4). 5. Tell the story of Gehazi's greed and punishment.

Questions to think about. 1. What story do you recall of a young lad who proved a great blessing to his captors? (Joseph). 2. Why did the curing of leprosy seem impossible to the king and not to the prophet? (The one did not know, the other did, the power of God). 3. Why did Elisha show no deference to Naaman? 4. Why was Naaman wroth? 5. We have a homely saying about "cutting off one's nose to spite one's face;" what does it mean? How was Naaman in danger of doing this? 6. Why did Elisha refuse to take Naaman's gift? 7. What can you do to be helpful to others?

SECOND QUARTER

LESSON I—APRIL 2

ELISHA HEALS NAAMAN THE SYRIAN

Golden Text

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. Isaiah 45.22.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 5.1-7. Naaman's Journey. **T.** 2 Kings 5.8-14. Naaman's Cleansing. **W.** 2 Kings 5.15-27. Gehazi Punished with Naaman's Leprosy. **T.** Luke 4.16-30. Elisha Sent only to Naaman the Syrian. **F.** Num. 12.1-15. The Leprosy of Miriam. **S.** 2 Chron. 26.16-23. The Leprosy of Uzziah. **S.** Mark 1.40-45. Jesus Healing a Leper.

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 5 PRINT vv. 1-14 COMMIT vv. 13-14

1 Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him Jehovah had given victory unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, *but he was* a leper. 2 And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! then would he recover him of his leprosy. 4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Israel. 5 And the king of Syria said, Go now, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment. 6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, And now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. 7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? but consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

8 And it was so, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. 9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. 11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12 Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? 14 Then he went down, and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *Captain of the host.* Commander-in-chief of the army.—*The King of Syria.* Probably Ben-hadad.—*A great man with his master.* Highly esteemed.

—*Honorable.* "Literally, man of respect."—*By him Jehovah had given victory unto Syria.* "Possibly the enemies from whom the Syrians had been saved were the Assyrians. Naaman, in delivering his countrymen from them, had been an unconscious instrument in the hands of Jehovah" (*Dummelow*). The inscriptions of Shalmaneser record three campaigns against Damascus.—*But he was a leper.* Notice that the first three words are in italics, showing that they are not in the original Hebrew.—*A leper.* A leper is unclean, he shall dwell alone: without the camp shall his dwelling be, Lev. 13.46. Evidently in Syria there were no such laws regarding lepers as were in force among the Israelites.

2. *In bands.* In plundering parties. Nominally the Syrians and Israelites were at peace.

4. *His lord.* Naaman's lord, the King of Syria.

5. *A letter unto the king of Israel.* Probably Jehoram. See Historical Background. The king of Syria assumes that the king of Israel will order the prophet to heal Naaman.—*Ten talents of silver.* A talent was ninety-six pounds in weight: $20,500, *Hastings. Six thousand pieces of gold.* Or, *shekels,* RVm. $61,000, *Hastings.* A shekel was a weight of 224 grains. The silver and gold were weighed, not coined.—*Ten changes of raiment.* See Gen. 45.22 and Light from Oriental Life.

6. *And now.* The first part of the letter, complimentary, is not repeated.

7. *He rent his clothes.* In token of his dismay.—*Am I God, to kill and make alive?* Only God can cure leprosy, is his thought.—*How he seeketh a quarrel against me.* Or, *an occasion,* RVm. On my failure to cure Naaman he will send his armies against me. Evidently Jehoram thought that the king of Syria was sure of victory and wanted only a pretext for attacking him.

8. *Elisha sent to the king.* Elisha's position as a prophet is very different from that of Elijah in the time of Ahab.

9. *Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots.* In all the pomp of royalty.

10. *Elisha sent a messenger to him.* He did not honor Naaman by coming out and speaking personally with him.—*Go and wash in the Jordan seven times.* Compare Jesus' direction to the man at the pool of Siloam, Jn. 9.7.—*Thy flesh shall come again to thee.* If the raw flesh turn again, and be changed into white, then the priest shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: he is clean, Lev. 13.17.

11. *Naaman was wroth.* He was treated with scant courtesy, he thought, for so great a man.—*Come out and stand.* Assume a ceremonious attitude.—*Call on the name of his God.* Naaman believed that each country had its own god: he expected Elisha to use some sort of incantation.—*Wave his hand over the place.* As heathen sorcerers would do.

13. *His servants came near.* So the servants of Saul constrained him, 1 S. 28.23. Naaman's servants were probably his officers.—*My father.* A customary title of honor or affection.

14. *Then went he down.* Down from Samaria to the Jordan Valley.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *But he was a leper.* It has long been the fashion to deduce from this description the melancholy lesson, that whatever may be our general good fortune in life there is certain to be some dismal "but" which will go a long way to mar the whole. We take it that the passage in question teaches also a very different and far more precious lesson. Suppose we read: "Naaman was a leper, but he was captain of the host of the King of Syria, he was also a mighty man in valor, a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria." This reading is just as legitimate as the other. Be sure, where there is a "but" against us, there are, as in the case of Naaman, several grand "buts" for us, and it will be most to our good to ponder these. *W. L. Watkinson,* in *Mistaken Signs.*

2. *Behold I thought.* The first two of our Lord's Beatitudes, as they are called, are "Blessed are the poor in spirit" and "Blessed are they that mourn." These two carry the conditions of entrance on the Christian life. There must

be consciousness of our own emptiness, weakness, and need; there must be penitent recognition of our own ill-desert, and lamentation over that. You may find on a lonely moor low contracted openings that lead into tortuous passages—the approaches to some of the ancient "Pict's houses," where a feeble folk dwelt and secured themselves from their enemies. The only way to get into them is to go down upon your knees; and the only way to get into this road—the way of righteousness—is by taking the same attitude. No man can enter unless—like that German Emperor whom a Pope kept standing in the snow three days outside the gate of Canossa—he is stripped of everything, down to the hair-shirt of penitence, and this is not easy. Naaman wanted to be healed as a great man in the court of Damascus. He had to strip himself of his offices, and dignities, and pride, and to come down to the level of any other leper. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Gospel of Matthew.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

5. *I will send a letter.* We do not know what material was used to write on, whether parchment or papyrus or tablet.

5. *He took with him silver and gold and changes of raiment.* It was customary to take valuable gifts to anyone of whom a favor was sought, or, as seen in the case of the Queen of Sheba, to the one visited. "Hardly any transaction of importance can take place in the East without a gift," says James M. Freeman. "The formal visits which friends make to each other are preceded by presents of fowls, sheep, rice, coffee, and other provisions. A refusal to receive a present is, throughout the East, interpreted as an evidence of enmity. Hence Jacob's anxiety that Esau should accept the gift he offered."

Especially valued were the changes of raiment, for in the East fashions of dress do not change as with us. In inventories of a man's wealth the costly garments are included. It is said of a noted oriental poet of the ninth century that "he had so many presents made him during his life-time that at his death he had one hundred complete suits of clothes, two hundred shirts and five hundred turbans."

6. *That thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.* Many remedies were already practised by the people, and there was apparently a body of healers or physicians. Compare the frequent use of the term *to heal* in metaphor. But on the part of the orthodox a strong feeling existed against physicians who did not associate their healing with the ceremonies enjoined by the Law; and it is clear that the priests were regarded as experts in medicine. See the various Levitical laws on leprosy, with the implication that the priests could destroy the various kinds of it: compare 2 Ch. 16.12. Greek physicians were probably the first in Jewish experience who used no religious formula in their art. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is recorded between our lessons that Elisha rendered harmless a mess of pottage which had been accidentally poisoned for the prophets at Gilgal, and fed a hundred men with a small amount of food which had been brought to him as a gift, but the events of his life can not be arranged chronologically.

Elisha's ministry extended through the reigns of four kings, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Joash. Because he was on friendly terms with the king of Israel mentioned in our lesson (verses 9-21), it is thought that the king was Jehoram, who reigned from 851 to 842 B. C.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

In Damascus, the capital of Syria, a picturesque old building is pointed out as "Naaman's house," one that is appropriately used now as a leper hospital.

The two rivers of Damascus to which Naaman refers, The Abanah and Pharpar, are called to-day the Barada and Awaj. The Barada is a beautifully clear river which rises in the Anti-Lebanon mountains, at the foot of Mount Hermon. Numerous ancient irrigating canals still exist which led off from the river and redeemed the site of Damascus from what would otherwise have

been a desert. The Awaj, too, rises on the great Hermon and is clear and fresh at first, but muddy in the later part of its course.

It was a long journey that Naaman took in his chariot from Damascus to Samaria. Doubtless he followed the Abanah to its source at the foot of Mount Hermon, then down the Upper Jordan from its source to the sea of Chinnereth, around that lake to the east and down the Lower Jordan valley a short distance, till he crossed the Jordan and went westward through the Plain of Jezreel to Samaria.

Assyrian Chariot

He had seen the Jordan's muddy waters and they could not compare with the Damascus rivers. The multitudes of pilgrims who annually bathe to-day in the "sacred waters" of the Jordan are little troubled because it is loaded with sediment. Mr. John Kelman, in "The Holy Land," well states the case for the Jordan: It created no great city as Abana created Damascus; but it streamed down the side of the east, flinging, as it were, a great arm around the land, claiming it from the desert and proclaiming this to be oasis and the home of men. Disraeli characteristically writes: "All the great things have been done by the little nation. It is the Jordan and the Ilyssus that have civilized the modern races." And truly it is the Jordan that is in great part responsible for the Hebrew share in that civilization—not by his material gifts, indeed, which were ever ungenerously given and carelessly gathered, but by his sentiment of isolation and aloofness from the rest of the Eastern world, to which we owe much that is best in our inheritance from Israel.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

"Man never is, but always to be blest." What a world of sad truth there is in this line of Pope's! How the little people long to be grown up, and how the grown people look constantly ahead to a time in the future when they shall attain happiness! The art of living in the present is not learned by the vast majority of people. If you can lead your pupils to acquire this art, you will have done much toward helping them to happiness. In this lesson let them see in the little captive maid's helpfulness that children need not wait till they are grown up before they can be of service and know the happiness that comes from helping others. Dwell upon the girl's part in the story. The Second Topic is for your class.

The lesson needs little explanation, and it is told with much fulness of detail. Study it as a model, from which you may learn how to tell a story in a dramatically interesting way.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. God is no respecter of persons. This was the Golden Text one Sunday, and a teacher was explaining its meaning to a class of young girls. "It means," she said, "that God loves the little girl in the shabby old frock as much as the little girl in the pretty new one—that does not make any difference at all." "Oh, I see; God looks inside us!" exclaimed one of the girls. There was a great Syrian general who had to learn this lesson.

For Older Pupils. It was the custom of Frederick William I, of Germany, to have an attendant read to him a prayer every night just before he retired. One night a newly-appointed attendant was reading for the first time, and he changed the words, "the Lord bless you" into "the Lord bless your majesty." "What is that you are reading?" questioned the king. The attendant thought he had not shown sufficient deference, and improved his reading by saying, "the Lord bless your most gracious majesty." Then the king exclaimed angrily: "Will you spoil the prayer for me? Before God I am a sinner like every one else. *You,* it reads, the Lord bless *you, you, you!*'

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Some Great Thing

Behold, I thought. How plainly we see this great man, Naaman, the commander-in-chief of the Syrian armies, coming in all his pomp and splendor to the humble door of Elisha the prophet and expecting to be treated "like a great man that happened to be a leper, while Elisha treated him like a leper who happened to be a great man!" He was angry because Elisha sent directions to him by a messenger instead of coming out to see himself, and because the directions were so simple. Physicians to-day tell a patient that all he needs is regular exercise and diet and sleep, and the patient, like Naaman, is wroth. Behold I thought, he says, that he would give me powerful medicines, order me to see some noted specialist, or prescribe a trip to some foreign baths, and he tells me to walk and eat and sleep! And he, too, goes away in a rage.

My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? With this question Naaman's attendants bring him to his senses. He has already done the great thing, he has taken the long journey to see the prophet—and has brought many thousands of dollars with which to pay for his cure; now let him try the simple thing that Elisha orders, and go and wash in the Jordan seven times.

Recall the two stanzas of Whittier's poem, The Cypress Tree of Ceylon:—

Easier to smite with Peter's sword
Than watch one hour in humbling prayer.
Lifes' great things, like the Syrian lord,
Our hearts can do and dare.

But oh! we shrink from Jordan's side,
From waters which alone can save,
And murmur for Abana's banks,
And Pharpar's brighter wave.

God wants Nothing from you but to take His Cure. Men will stand, as Indian fakirs do, with their arms above their heads until they stiffen there. They will perch themselves upon pillars, like Simeon Stylites, for years, till the birds build their nests in their hair. They will measure all the distance from Cape Comorin to Juggernaut's temple with their bodies along the dusty road. They will wear hair shirts and scourge themselves. They will fast and deny themselves. They will build cathedrals and endow churches. They will do as many of you do, labor by fits and starts all through your lives at the endless task of making yourselves ready for heaven, and winning it by obedience and by righteousness. They will do all these things and do them gladly, rather than listen to the humbling message that says, "You do not need to do anything—wash." Is it your washing, or the water, that will clean you? Wash and be clean! Naaman's cleansing was only a test of his obedience, and a token that it was God who cleansed him. There was no power in Jordan's waters to take away the taint of leprosy. Our cleansing is in that blood of Jesus Christ that has the power to take away all sin, and to make the foulest amongst us pure and clean. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Second Book of Kings.*

Some Great Service. There are many who covet the opportunity of doing a great service, and yet wholly overlook the numerous small services they might render.

"How I wish I had a poor family to work for," said a girl enthusiastically, as Dr. J. R. Miller tells us. "Well, you haven't," her brother retorted, "but grandmother needs some one to read to her. Why need you go hunting a job of doing a kindness, when there's one in the house."

The little Hebrew slave girl who only told what she knew about the prophet Elisha, did her master the greatest possible service. She might have said to herself, I am only a slave, there is nothing that I can do and nothing can be expected of me, and yet when she did what she could that proved to be a greater service than could have been rendered by all the noble and wealthy and influential men of the king's court. There are Christian workers to-day who would gladly do some great philanthropic work but who seem to think it

not worth while to do the thing they can do if that is a good work on a small scale.

II A Little Maiden

What a Little Hebrew Maid accomplished. It is not much that we are told about the little captive Hebrew maid, and yet how well we seem to know her! We can see her as a happy girl in her home in Northern Israel helping her mother in her work, playing with merry companions, and learning to know and reverence the Lord, the God of her fathers; then we hear the coming of a band of Syrian warriors, and we see the frightened girl seized and carried off with them to a distant land. She is made a slave in the house of Naaman the general and her special duty is to wait upon his wife. She must have done her duty faithfully and well, for she wins the favor of her mistress, and though in an idol-worshipping home she remains true to her worship of God. In that prosperous home there is a great sorrow; its master is a leper. Some slaves might have rejoiced at the sufferings of one who kept them in servitude in a strange land; not so this maiden, whom we may call Faith because of her strong faith in God's power working through His prophet. "Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria," Faith said to Naaman's wife, "for he would cure his leprosy." She told her husband what Faith had said, and they followed her advice. So it came about that the great general not only was healed but was led to acknowledge that Jehovah is God.

What a Little Indian Maid accomplished. See that Indian Guru on the roadside! The whole country-side know him as "Vithoba's Pilgrim," for in search of spiritual peace he has wandered from one shrine to another covering great distances in Western India. To-day he is in Kolhapur. Sitting, tailor-like, on a tiger-skin, without clothing, save a loin-cloth and a string of beads, he is reading aloud his Mantras or religious Hindu books. In an hour or so the sun will be at its fiercest. Then Guru's hair, the growth of years, nearly two yards long, bound round his head, will be his protection. There he sits and receives the pious homage of passers-by, for he is the personification of the highest Hindu ideals.

Let loose from school, a tiny girl bounds up to the Guru. She hears him read of over three hundred millions of gods, and at once says: "That is not true, there is but one God." An uneven dialogue ensues, and it is punctuated by the Marathi lass giving him her booklet, which tells of another Guru, Jesus.

It is a long and thrilling story: the after-life of this Guru. The Nazarene conquered! Satoba Ranoji Ranbhise became, not only a Christian convert, but a most effective Christian pastor. In a single decade of work he gathered out of Hinduism a church of three hundred adult converts and three hundred and fifty baptized children. Referring to his Guru life before the small girl arrested him, he said: "It was like attempting to grasp at a fistful of water—nothing remained in the grasp after all the effort." In Jesus he found a Savior, who made Satoba, in turn, a Christian Guru of his own generation. A little child shall lead them. Quoted in *Sunday-School Chronicle.*

Can I Help? One summer a little girl of five was sent to visit some cousins of her mother. The cousins were all grown people, none of them even young, and they dreaded the child's visit. Not that they anitcipated any trouble that she might make, but they feared that she might be homesick and lonesome in a house so strange to all childish ways.

From the first hour, however, it was evident that the little maid was the possessor of a charm that made loneliness an unknown word. She had the friendly heart. She made friends with every one, from the minister to the milkman, and being friends meant of course that she was deeply interested in everything that any of these delightful people did.

Most of all, with a pretty loyalty that was irresistible, she was devoted to her cousins. Day after day through the two happy months she "helped" Cousin Mary cook delectable dishes, and Cousin Ellen dust the wonderful things in the parlor, and Cousin Henry feed the hens and pick berries.

Long before she left it was an understood thing that she was to come back every summer. It was the last thing they called out to her when they waved

good-by to the sunny little face at the car window—she was going home in the conductor's care; of course the conductor was her friend at sight.

They never saw her again. Quite suddenly, two months later, the beautiful little life was ended. That was what people said, but those who had known her knew that that was not true, even down here. This is what one of the cousins wrote the mother:

"We are trying, all of us, not to grieve because the world seems empty without Lydia. Her spirit is still with us, touching every common task of every day. There was one sentence that was upon her lips constantly—it seems to me I can hear her dear voice saying this minute—'Can I help thee?' Thee will understand, Rachel. We are as loving a family as most, I think, and we try to do our share of 'helping,' in the world. But I know that our love is deepened, our desire for service more eager, the 'Can I help thee?' oftener in our hearts because for two months we lived with thy beautiful child." *The Youth's Companion.*

III Missionary Topic The Universality of God's Love

The Lesson emphasized by Jesus. Jesus emphasized the thought that Elijah's and Elisha's missions were not limited to the Israelites. In His words to His town's people, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He said: There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land: and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet: and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.

Naaman, a foreigner, a general in the army of Israel's enemy, an idolater, sought and received aid from the prophet in Israel. Not only was he cured, but his cure led to his great acknowledgment: Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. When Naaman came to Samaria he believed that each country had its own God, and he had found out that the gods of Syria were not powerful enough to cure his leprosy. His cure in Israel was a free gift from Jehovah, and he then recognized that no gods elsewhere were so powerful as Jehovah the God of Israel. He had yet to learn that Jehovah is the God, not of Israel alone, but of all the earth, and what we have been told about his character justifies us in thinking that he could make still further progress in knowledge till he could say: The God of Israel is the only true God, He is the universal God, He reigns over all the earth.

The Birthright of All. We have no more right to limit the Sun of Righteousness to the Anglo-Saxons than we have the right or the power to limit the sunlight to the European or the American continent. It is a false liberalism which says: The Chinese have Confucius and the Western Nations have Christ, and we ought not to disturb the Chinese Empire and create strife by attempting to overthrow established customs and national religion. The advocates of that theory assume, as did the Jews of old, that the God of revelation belongs to us alone. Pray how did we capture Him from the Jews to whom He originally belonged? If God is the God of the universe, if Jesus Christ is really He through whom all things were made and without whom was not anything made that was made, then He is the Saviour of all men, and we have no justification for robbing the people of India and of China of their birthright. *J. W. Bashford,* in *God's Missionary Plan for the World.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

God hath His small interpreters;
The child must teach the man. *Whittier.*

Beneath Thy broad, impartial eye,
How fade the lines of caste and birth!
How equal in their suffering lie
The groaning multitudes of earth! *Whittier.*

Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last: and beside me there is no God. Isa. 44.6.

How do I know He is Jesus, the Lord?
I was leprous, and foul, and mean:
I fell at His feet, and He lifted me up—
Saying, "I will; be clean!" *Robert J. Burdette.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Naaman learned the wisdom of obeying the will of God as declared by the prophet. Have we learned the wisdom of obeying His will as declared by His Son?

Naaman learned that God's blessing comes as a free gift, it cannot be bought. 'Tis only Heaven can be had for the asking.

Naaman learned that in doing the will of God he attained to the knowledge of God. If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God.

Leprosy is a symbol for sin. In the curing of Naaman we see that greater miracle, the cleansing of all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE LESSON

Gratefully Naaman returned to Samaria and sought the prophet. "Now I know that there is no God but in Israel," he said, and he offered all his treasures to Elisha. Elisha refused to accept anything; the cure had been brought by Jehovah whom he served. Naaman then asked that he might take back with him two loads of earth on which to rear his altar to Jehovah, for he would not henceforth offer sacrifices to Syrian gods: he would be obliged to attend his king when he went to the house of the Syrian god Rimmon to worship, and would have to bow there, but he hoped Jehovah would pardon this. "Go in peace," said the prophet.

Gehazi, the prophet of Elisha, could not bear to see all that treasure carried back which Elisha had refused. He hastened after Naaman, told him that two prophets had come to see Elisha, and asked for a talent of silver and two changes of raiment for them. Naaman pressed upon him double the amount of silver, and sent men back to the house with gifts. When Gehazi appeared in Elisha's presence, Elisha asked him where he had been. "I have been nowhere" Gehazi answered. Then Elisha told him what he had done, reminded him of the visions of wealth and splendor in which he had been indulging, and then pronounced his terrible punishment. Gehazi went out from Elisha's presence a leper as white as snow.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Preconceived notions as to the way in which God must work.
2. Leper missions.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Where is Dothan? 2. What event in patriarchal history occurred at Dothan? (Gen. 37.17-28). 3. When before did Elisha behold horses and chariots of fire? (Lesson X, First Quarter). 4. Read the thirty-fourth Psalm, Jehovah a Provider and Deliverer, and commit to memory verse 7. 5. What did Paul say in his letter to the Romans that recalls the sixteenth verse of our lesson? (Rom. 8.31.) 6. When Jesus was arrested what heavenly defense did He say He might have if He wished? (Mt. 26.53.) 7. What became of the Syrians who surrounded Dothan? (2 K. 6.18-23.) 8. What later events in Elisha's life are recorded? (Clipping, p. 165.)

Questions to think about. 1. What does the phrase "in such and such a place" mean? 2. Who was "the man of God"? Why was he so called? 3. What should we say instead of "not once nor twice," verse 10? 4. What is the teaching of the lesson for us?

Note-book and Memory Work. In your Book of Prophets write an account of Elisha's Healing of Naaman's Leprosy. Read Whittier's Legend of St. Mark and commit to memory the last five stanzas.

LESSON II—APRIL 9

ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS

Golden Text

For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Ps. 91.11.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 6.8-23. Elisha's Heavenly Defenders. **T.** 2 Kings 6.24-7.2. Elisha's Prophecy of Plenty. **W.** 2 Kings 7.3-20. Elisha's Prophecy of Plenty Fulfilled. **T.** 1 Sam. 11.1-13. Deliverance through the Lord. **F.** 2 Chron. 32.1-23. Hezekiah's Trust in the Lord. **S.** Dan. 6.1-27. Daniel's Trust in the Lord. **S.** Ps. 34.1-22. Deliverance by the Angel of the Lord. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 6.8-23 PRINT vv. 8-17 COMMIT vv. 15-17

8 Now the king of Syria was warring against Israel; and he took counsel with
his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. 9 And the
man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not
such a place; for thither the Syrians are coming down. 10 And the king of
Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of;
and he saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11 And the heart of the
king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and
said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?
12 And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet
that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy
bedchamber. 13 And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and fetch
him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.
14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they
came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the
man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host with horses and
chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my
master! how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not; for they that are
with us are more than they that are with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and
said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened
the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of
horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

8. *The king of Syria.* Probably Ben-hadad II.—*Was warring against Israel.* Whether before or after the cure of Naaman we do not know.—*In such and such a place.* In a definitely named place.—*Camp.* Or, *encamping,* RVm.

9. *The man of God.* Elisha.—*Beware that thou pass not such a place.* Naming some definite place. According to Josephus, the king of Israel was starting for a hunt when he received Elisha's warning.

10. *The King of Israel.* Probably Jehoram.—*Not once nor twice.* Several times.

11. *Sore troubled.* "He lost courage" (*Luther*).—*Which of us is for the king of Israel?* He thought there must be a traitor within his own ranks.

12. *Elisha the prophet.* His fame extended into Syria.

13. *That I may send and fetch him.* He seems to think that Elisha knows his plans against the kingdom but will not know them against himself.

14. *Therefore sent he thither a great host.* This recalls the multitudes who came to take Jesus, Mt. 26.47.

16. *They that are with us are more than they that are with them.* Compare

Hezekiah's words to the people: Be not afraid nor dismayed, for the king of Assyria; for there is a greater with us than with him; with him is an arm of the flesh; but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles, 2 Ch. 32.7, 8. Compare also Num. 14.9; Ps. 3.6; 27.3; Rom. 8.31.

17. *Open his eyes.* Let him have a vision of our defenders.—*The mountain.* The hill on which Dothan was built.—*Round about Elisha.* Compare Ps. 34.7; 91.4.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

11. *Which of us is for the king of Israel?* In a debate in Parliament recently it was stated that whatever was mentioned publicly as to our intentions with regard to Somaliland was at once made known to the Mullah. *R. Bruce Taylor.*

17. *The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire.*

But not the less gray Dothan shone
With sunbright watchers bending low,
That Fear's dim eye beheld alone
The spearheads of the Syrian foe.

There are, who, like the seer of old,
Can see the helpers God has sent,
And how life's rugged mountain-side
Is white with many an angel tent!

Whittier's Legend of St. Mark.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

12. *The words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.* This shows how great must have been Elisha's reputation in Syria, for no man was ever permitted to enter the king's bedchamber.

14. *They came by night.* In all parts of the East the sudden raids, which are so characteristic of oriental warfare, generally take place at night and under cover of the darkness. *H. B. Tristram.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The verses between our last lesson and this tell us that the number of the prophet-disciples who dwelt near the Jordan increased so that another building became necessary. As they were cutting down the trees on the banks of the Jordan for timber one of them lost his axe and he told his loss to Elisha, who caused the iron to rise so that it was recovered.

We have seen Elisha's helpfulness on several occasions to individuals. We now see that he was a power in the political and military affairs of his country. Ben-hadad II, king of Syria, was bent on subjugating Israel, and Israel must have been weak or he could not have laid siege to a town so near the capital.

As this is our last lesson about Elisha, let us see what the record tells as to the remainder of his life. After the events of to-day's lesson, Ben-hadad besieged Samaria and the people suffered terribly from famine. The king of Syria sent a messenger to kill Elisha, for he held him responsible for the state of affairs, but the prophet foretold immediate relief. His predictions were fulfilled, the Syrians thought that the Hittites and Egyptians had been hired to attack them, and they fled in a panic. Four lepers made the discovery of the flight and reported it to the incredulous king.

Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-hadad, who was sick, sent his servant Hazael to learn whether he would recover. Elisha told Hazael that his master would recover from his disease, but would surely die, and that he, Hazael, would do much evil to Israel. Hazael told Ben-hadad that he would get well, then smothered him with the coverlet of his bed, and made himself king.

While Jehu was in command of the forces besieging Ramoth-Gilead, Elisha sent one of the sons of the prophets to anoint him king, thus carrying out the commission which Elijah received, 1 K. 19.16. See lesson VIII of First Quarter.

When Elisha at an advanced age lay on his death-bed Joash was king of Israel. The king wept at the thought of Elisha's departing, saying, as Elisha had of Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Through three long, distracting reigns, in the words of Dr. George Adam Smith, the prophet Elisha, genuine borderman as he was, expert in camp-life, ambush and scouting, inspired with political foresight, was also the moral stay and inspiration of his broken people, in truth the very chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Dothan was twelve miles north of Samaria on the caravan route between Damascus and Egypt. It was on a small hill which could easily be surrounded by the Syrian army. The only other mention of Dothan in the Old Testament is in Gen. 37.17-28, where we read that there Joseph's brothers conspired against him and sold him to the Ishmaelites who carried him into Egypt.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

The little child is naturally religious. In all your teaching do not lose this faith, even though you may have a class in a mission school where no signs of the "trailing clouds of glory" seem to have lingered with your pupils. The little child is not troubled with doubts: never suggest any to him. It is easy for him to believe in God: take this for granted. It is easy for him to love God: represent God to him as a loving Father who cares for His children. His eyes are easily opened to spiritual truths: help him to gain the true vision. In this story of the two armies, one visible and the other invisible, you have an opportunity to sow the seeds of faith in God and of love for the Heavenly Father who will keep His child in all his ways.

After you have taught the story, ask the question in "Suggestions for Beginning the Lesson for Younger Pupils." Perform the experiment told about on p. 167. Explain what "seeing God' means, adapting Bishop Brooks' thoughts, p. 170, to your pupils; and then talk about the Golden Text. Expand the thought of the first paragraph in the second topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. "Why can't we see God if He is here?" a little girl once asked her father. "What do you think is the reason?" her father asked in return. "I guess it's because we haven't the right kind of eyes," she said thoughtfully, and then added, "We get a different kind of eyes when we die, don't we?"

Must we wait till we die before we see God in the sense that we are aware of His presence? It is not that we haven't the right kind of eyes for this kind of sight, but that we do not make the right use of the eyes we have, if we can not repeat believingly the words of our Golden Text. What are they? Tell me how the truth of this thought was made clear to a young man in Dothan, and then we will see how it can be made clear to us here in —.

For Older Pupils. One November day in 1864 President Lincoln was returning from the office of the Secretary of War. As he passed through the long hall of the War and Navy Building he saw a weary soldier in tattered uniform wandering along the corridor and anxiously scanning the doors. "My good man, whom do you wish to see?" questioned Lincoln. The soldier told him that his three-year term of service was over, and he wished to go to his home in Vermont, but he had no money, only an order from his regimental paymaster for his back pay. He had been wandering for hours vainly trying to find the officer to whom his order was directed. The President did not know where that officer was to be found, but he knew how to help that soldier. He took a blank card and held it against the wall while he wrote this note upon it:

"This poor soldier is in distress because he can get no pay. Will Paymaster General please have him put on the right track to get his pay?

A. LINCOLN."

Nov. 9th, 1864.

Lincoln then directed the soldier to the Paymaster General's office and bade him present the card at the door. Of course the soldier promptly received his pay.

Can you not see how Lincoln's face beamed with pleasure because he had this opportunity of helping one in distress? His heart was overburdened with anxiety for the nation, yet he was glad to forget his great anxieties for a moment and give aid to an obscure soldier. If we had a fuller record of the prophet Elisha's long life, we should see, I think, that his deeds of kindness to individuals here and there, which the Bible records, were but incidental acts wrought, as were Lincoln's, in the midst of grave cares of state. We have a glimpse in our text to-day of the share Elisha had in national affairs.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Reality of Spiritual Forces

What the Lesson teaches. You recall how "Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And Jacob said when he saw them, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim." And Mahanaim means the *Two Hosts,* or *Two Camps.* This record from Genesis teaches the same thought as does our text from Second Kings. This world is full of spiritual presences and spiritual forces, a man with his eyes wide open may be unable to see them, they await only one of spiritual vision to reveal them. This is the self-evident teaching of the occurrence at Dothan.

In the words of another: "It were a vain question in the presence of a great suggestive picture like this to debate the question as to the substantiality or unsubstantiality of those chariots and horses of fire. In the presence of a great picture it may suit some critics to bring their spectacles and their chemical apparatus to test the character of the canvas and the constituent elements of the artist's colors, but to the most of us it would be an act of profanation to deal so with a great work of genius that has its lesson written plain and large across its surface."

Invisible but Real. Here are two glasses of water which look just alike. (One contains a little nitrate of silver.) You cannot tell that there is any difference between them; yet there is a difference, although you cannot detect it. I will drop a pinch of salt into one, and then you will see how unlike they are. You notice a white cloud forming, which is called a precipitation.

I put the same amount into the other glass, and it does not change it. The reason why the salt produces the white precipitation in the first glass is because there was in the water the chemical called nitrate of silver; the salt made its presence known to us. The silver was there before we put the salt into the glass but we could not see it; our eyes were not able to detect its presence.

There are many things which exist in the world which our eyes are not sufficiently powerful to behold. In this we are like the disciples who were walking to Emmaus. Jesus drew near and walked and talked with them, and they knew Him not. At the end of the journey their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.

He has left us the promise, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. He draws near to us, and walks with us; but we are not able to see Him any more than our eyes could detect the silver in the glass of water. By and by our eyes will be opened to see; so we should trust and love Him now. *C. H. Tyndall,* in *Object-Lessons for Children.*

Analogy of Material and Spiritual. It is a commonplace, for instance, that the enormous increase in men's use of the forces in nature is not due to man's creation; but to his discovery of what was already in nature. The electric forces which are now at work in our streets and homes, and which are causing such readjustments of our habits of life, are not new creations. The latent powers were there, waiting only for the patient labor, the skill and the scientific spirit of man to reveal them and harness them into man's service. Or, again, in the library and lectures and historic heritages there are storehouses of knowledge and wisdom. But if you think at all, you must realize that these riches are revealed only to those who are ready to open their eyes to them, and by patient study bring them into their lives.

Now the question arises whether there is not something analogous to this in the realm of character and of spiritual things. Are we to agree that there are limitless resources in nature and in knowledge and deny that character and spiritual manhood have any such store-house? Or are we to accept the fact that the heavenly powers are, and that they stand ready to serve any man who will discover them and call them to his aid? *Bishop William Laurance,* in *Visions and Service.*

What are the Spiritual Forces? Let me name a few: they are familiar to our ears, but not familiar enough in our personal experience. There is, as the fundamental power, *the truth that God is:* that the Almighty, the Jehovah, the Heavenly Father, now lives and works and loves. Perhaps we do not think of it often in this way. Yet, after all, it is the assurance of God's existence that is our deepest and final support. Cut it out from your life, and what have you but chaos? Bring it into your life, not as commonplace, but as a vital truth, and you have this, that as God is Truth, and Love, and Wisdom, you have, if you abide in God's presence, the whole power of Truth, Love, and Wisdom to back you. You have an infinite storehouse from which to draw. From Him cometh, and may come in these months, if we seek them, every good and perfect gift.

Again, there is the fact that the Son of God once walked this earth and that He lived a spotless life; and, having tasted for man all the sufferings and ills common to men, and having conquered sin and death, now lives, and sitting on the right hand of the Father, is forever the type of the perfect humanity, and the inspiration to all men to live as in His presence. Imagine for a moment, if you can, the facts and the power of the life of Jesus cut out, eliminated from history and modern civilization, and from the lives of men, and what have you of character and moral fibre and all that goes to make up the best of humanity? *The fact of the Incarnation of the Son of God* is, however, a truth from which the world has only begun to draw. There are infinite possibilities still unfathomed.

The truth of the brooding of *the Holy Spirit* over the lives of men, and of His waiting to touch them with the fire of divine love, has hardly yet been explored.

There are, too, those mysterious beings and powers of which this day speaks, ten thousand times ten thousand angels and archangels, all ministering spirits. Whatever your theory may be about them, they stand for heavenly, spiritual forces waiting to come to the aid of men. *Bishop William Laurance,* in *Visions and Service.*

Revealers of Spiritual Forces. The natives of Cawnpore used to say of Henry Martyn, "God is shining in that man's face." Do you wonder that he was an interpreter to them of heavenly power when he could write in his diary, "My principal enjoyment is the enjoyment of God's presence"? They only can point out the heavenly powers who have themselves had the vision, who know the enjoyment of God's presence. Elisha could make the young man see the horses and chariots of fire round about because he himself saw them.

II The Helpfulness of Spiritual Forces

The Secret of Courage. What made Jesus Christ so brave and strong? Was it not this, that He was always seeing God? We think it strange that Jesus could stand so bravely before the Pharisees and the Romans and feel no fear. Was it strange, if the Father was closer to Him than the Romans and Pharisees all the while and hid them from Him; if the trumpets and the chariots upon the mountains were so loud in His ears that He could not hear the clatter of the hosts upon the plains? Our Pharisees are so much nearer and closer to us than our Father. The secret of courage is so simple after all. *Phillips Brooks,* in *New Starts in Life.*

He shall give His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all Thy Ways. At the bottom of the River Rhine there lies a heavy, iron cable; through the swiftest currents and the rapids here and there, the heavy steam barges can only make their way by gripping this cable in their powerful wheels and slowly, hand over hand as it were, steam against the current. I remember to have floated down that river in a terrific storm. Here and there under the shelter

of some promontory were the smaller boats, and here at the side safely anchored huge steamers, and here a shipwrecked schooner, blown by the wind and current on the rocks. In the center of the stream, as if unmindful of the waves and storm, a single heavy barge was breasting every difficulty and slowly moving up the current; as we drew near I saw that heavy iron cable around the gripping wheels at the barge's side that explained it all. It was clinging to the heavy cable and making its way grandly up the stream against the current, and the waves and storm. So, I thought, at the bottom of every tide of life, through every current of its evil, there lies a ready help for man, the heavy iron cable of God's unfailing strength. Let me grip that cable and I will laugh at all the storms of evil. I will defy and mock its every tide and current.

Oh, yes, my friends, God's help alone avails. Gigantic is the power of surrounding sin, but omnipotent is God, and the weakest in His strength may overcome. No human will is strong enough alone to grapple with its sin, but in Christ we can meet it and triumph over it. For every contrary tide there is a cable. Fortunate the man who grips and holds to Jesus. He alone shall know a lasting and perfect victory. *Wilton Merle Smith,* in *Giving a Man Another Chance.*

Fear not, for they that are with us are more than they that are with them. "Do you see that little finger?" once said the Burgomaster of Hamburg to Mr. Onchen. "As long as I can move that finger I will put down the Baptists." "Yes," said Onchen, "I see your little finger, and I also see a great arm, which you cannot see. As long as the great arm of God is lifted on our behalf, your little finger will have no terror for us."

Jehovah is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
Jehovah is the strength of my life,
Of whom shall I be afraid?
Though a host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise up against me,
Even then will I be confident.

The Elder Brother's Help. Mrs. Gaskell, in "Sylvia's Lovers," tells of a traveller driving in the dark along a lonely lane. Suddenly he becomes aware of the presence of his dead brother in the cart beside him. As he drives on wondering, two threatening figures rise up from behind the hedge, and he hears a muttered oath, "What, two of them!" The robbers hesitate and fall back, and he passes on in safety. As he realizes this, he finds his protector has vanished. This has been literal truth in the experience of many of God's people. They have walked accompanied by the Brother, who liveth for evermore, and in some moment of revealing they have seen, as Elisha's servant saw, the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. *Editorial in Sunday-School Chronicle.*

See God in To-day. A recent writer has said that the classification of men with regard to religion will have to be changed soon. We shall not divide them into Catholics and Protestants, Churchmen and Dissenters, Presbyterians and Methodists, but into the men who see and the men who do not see.

I ask a friend, Do you believe in God? and he is almost indignant at the question. But when I press him and get him to tell me something of this God, he describes to me the God of David, speaks of the God of Paul, grows eloquent over the God of covenanting or disruption times; or else he takes me into the distant future and speaks of the love and joy and peace of heaven, when the shadows are gone and the night is fled away. But when I ask him, What of your life to-night? What of this city's sin and cry to-night? I find that for the world's yesterday and for the world's to-morrow he believes, but for to-night he is an atheist. Once there were horses and chariots of fire, and there shall be again. But to-day there is nothing but the hills and moorlands, and the Assyrian army in the valley.

Oh, it is very hard to see God in to-day. It needs an opening of the eyes, like Elisha's servant got, to catch the trend of the everlasting love in the petty transactions of the present hour. *G. H. Morrison,* in *Flood-Tide.*

III Open his Eyes that he may See

What seeing God means. We say that "seeing God" is the source and secret of all true courage. What do we really mean by seeing God? As soon as we own that the sight by the bodily eyes is impossible, we own that there is a figurative element in the expression. Let us see what it is. To see God, then, I think, may be separated into these three elements.

First, it is to recognize His character as the ruling law of the universe. The qualities of God we know. They are involved in our very conception of Him. He is righteous, just, loving, true, pure. Now, when your eyes are opened, you see these divine principles running everywhere.

And, secondly, to see God is to see God's purposes in everything. The two are one in essence, but different in apprehension. But when the world opens to you as a plan of God, when all existence is vocal with His meaning, when His intentions thread the universe, so what he who reads human progress, in its largeness or its littleness, reads God's will; that, again, is seeing God.

And still more to see God is to be conscious of our own spiritual relations to Him, to know as a comfort and a motive that He loves us, to be surrounded with His companionship, to find that what we do depends not merely upon what He is but upon His being present with us; in a word, to love our Father with an active love—that is a life for which the devout soul finds no adequate description but that it is "seeing God."

This, then, is what we mean by "seeing God." It is to have the whole world as we think of it, as we live in it, full of His character, His purposes, and His love. *Phillips Brooks,* in *New Starts in Life.*

Sight is of the Soul.

"The man is blind. What is life to him?
A closed book held up against a sightless face.
Would that he could see
Yon beauteous star, and know
For one transcendent moment
The palpitating joy of sight!"

All sight is of the soul. Behold it
In the upward flight
Of the unfettered spirit! Hast thou
Seen thought bloom in the blind child's face?
Hast thou seen his mind grow,
Like the running dawn, to grasp
The vision of the Master?
It was the miracle of inward sight. *Helen Keller.*

The Eyesalve Needed. There is a little weed that grows in our fields, with pretty white flowers, called Euphrasy, or Eye-bright. It used to be said that if the juice of this plant were rubbed upon the eyes, it enabled one to see the fairies and all the secrets of the invisible world. Milton represents the Archangel Michael as purging Adam's eyes from the film of sin with it, that he might see the wonderful sights of heaven. This is a superstition; but the Lord Jesus Himself counsels the blind church of Laodicea to buy of Him eyesight salve, that it may be able to see its evil state and the remedy for it (Rev. 3.18). He counsels you to buy His wonderful eye-salve, which is just faith, and you can buy it without money and without price, for it is the gift of God. You will get it for the asking, and it will cure your blindness, and enable you to see what others do not see. You will have the pure heart that shall see God, and the sight will make you as bold and fearless as it made the young man of Dothan. *Hugh Macmillan,* in *The Clock of Nature.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

The soul divines what is divine. *Tertullian.*
There is a view of sight; there is a view of faith. *Joseph Parker.*
Death is the enlightener: it opens the eyes to see the things that are.

The true and only conqueror of reasonable fear is still more reasonable trust. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Man has always the source of infinite power, if he knows God well enough and confidently enough to ask for that power. *E. E. Hale.*

Open our eyes and make us see,
The path that leads to heaven and Thee! *John Hay.*

The more you can retain the impression of being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses of the invisible world, the more you will be armed against fault. *Wilberforce.*

The higher nature through some of its deep needs or lofty impulses is always trying to open the eyes of our lower and despondent nature to see the divine and hopeful powers which are at work upon our life. *Phillips Brooks.*

Though a host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear. Ps. 27.3.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Ampère was led by a friend to try his eye-glasses, when to the latter's great surprise the great electrician burst into tears. Ampère had not known before that he was near-sighted, and the sudden realization of what beauty and interest he had missed all his life was overwhelming. Are we perhaps ignorant of spiritual near-sightedness?

When we pass from the bright sunlight into a darkened room we can at first see little, but gradually the pupils of our eyes enlarge until what was invisible becomes visible. As with the physical, so may it be with the spiritual sight: the power of spiritual vision will enlarge if we live up to the faith we have.

Do not look so constantly at the things that are seen that you have not time to look at the things which are not seen.

His angels shall keep thee in all thy ways. It *may* be His will that His followers are safely kept in times of physical danger: it *is* His will that they are kept in security in times of spiritual perils.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE LESSON

Elisha asked the Lord to smite the Syrians with blindness. He went out to them and they did not know him. Bidding them follow him he led them to Samaria. Their eyes were opened and they found themselves in the power of the Israelites at their capital. Elisha prevented the king of Israel from putting them to death, and after having them royally fed he sent them back to Damascus.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Encouragement for champions of unpopular causes.
2. The unseen realities.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read about the deeds of Jehu in 2 K. 9 and 10. 2. Read the entire chapter. 3. Read the parallel account in 2 Ch. 22.10-23.21. 4. What promise was given to the house of David in 2 Sam. 7.13; 1 K. 11.36; 15.4; 2 K. 8.19? 5. How old was Joash when he was made king? (2 K. 11. 21.) 6. How had Athaliah treated the temple of Jehovah? (2 Ch. 24.7.)

Questions to think about. 1. In which kingdom have been the scenes of our recent lessons? 2. To which kingdom do we now turn? 3. What two good kings of Judah have we heard about? (Lessons III and V of first Quarter.) 4. What other queen does Athaliah resemble? 5. What was the relationship of the two? 6. How did the promise made to the house of David seem broken? 7. What was the result of this almost bloodless revolution?

Note-book Work. 1. Tell the story of the two armies, one visible and the other invisible, and its lesson. 2. In your Book of the Prophets complete your record of Elisha's Life.

LESSON III—APRIL 16

JOASH, THE BOY KING, CROWNED IN JUDAH

Golden Text

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. Ps. 119.2.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 11.1-20; 2 Chron. 22.10-23.15. Joash, the Boy King, Crowned in Judah. **T.** 2 Kings 8.7-15. Elisha's Prophecy of the Death of Ben-hadad. **W.** 2 Kings 8.16-29; 2 Chron. 21.1-22.9. The Rule in Judah of the House of Ahab. **T.** 2 Kings 9.1-16. The Anointing of Jehu. **F.** 2 Kings 9.17-28. Remembering the Blood of Naboth. **S.** 2 Kings 9.30-37. Word Fulfilled concerning Jezebel. **S.** 2 Kings 10.1-36. The Sweeping Reforms of Jehu. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 11.1-20 PRINT vv. 9-20 COMMIT v. 12

9 And the captains over hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded; and they took every man his men, those that were to come in on the sabbath, with those that were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. 10 And the priest delivered to the captains over hundreds the spears and shields that had been king David's, which were in the house of Jehovah. 11 And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king round about. 12 Then he brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and *gave him* the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, *Long* live the king.

13 And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard *and of* the people, she came to the people into the house of Jehovah: 14 and she looked, and, behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason! treason! 15 And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth between the ranks; and him that followeth her slay with the sword. For the priest said, Let her not be slain in the house of Jehovah. 16 So they made way for her; and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house: and there was she slain.

17 And Jehoiada made a covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people; between the king also and the people. 18 And all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of Jehovah. 19 And he took the captains over hundreds, and the Carites, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of Jehovah, and came by the way of the gate of the guard unto the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. 20 So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. And Athaliah they had slain with the sword at the king's house.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-20. Read the parallel account in Chronicles.

1. *All the seed royal.* The forty-two "brethren of Ahaziah" slain by Jehu (10.13), were relatives of the king, but there were other male members of the royal house whom Athaliah now put to death.

2. *Jehosheba.* Sister of Ahaziah. She was the daughter of his father Je-

horam and of another wife, not of his mother Athaliah. According to 2 Ch. 20.11, she was the wife of Jehoiada, the priest.—*Bed-chamber.* The storeroom where the mattresses were stored.

9. *The captains over hundreds.* Centurions.—*According to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded.* Vv. 4-8.—*Those that were to come in on the sabbath.* 1 Ch. 9.25.

10. *The spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of Jehovah.* These were the weapons David had taken from his conquered enemies and stored in the temple: compare 2 S. 8.7.

11. *Along by the altar and the house.* "The meaning seems to be that the guards formed a semicircle extending from the south to the north corner of the temple, and surrounding the brazen altar which stood before the temple. Thus all the space between the porch and the altar would be enclosed" (*Burney*).

12. *The king's son.* Joash, who had been hidden from Athaliah, v. 2.—*Gave him the testimony.* He was formally presented with his special roll of the Law: see Ex. 25.16. It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God to keep all the words of this law, Dt. 17.18, 19. The words *gave him* are added by the translators, as the italics show, and the literal wording is, "they put upon him the crown and the testimony." It is suggested by Hebrew scholars that a difference of only a single letter would give the Hebrew word for "bracelets" instead of "testimony."

13. *When Athaliah heard the noise.* So quickly and quietly had the plan been carried out that the queen mother was taken completely by surprise.

14. *The king stood by the pillar.* Or, *on the platform,* RVm.—*As the manner was.* Evidently by the pillar was the special position for a prince when he was crowned king.—*Athaliah rent her clothes.* One glance showed her the meaning of the scene, and she showed her anger in the customary way.

15. *Have her forth between the ranks.* He kept her surrounded by his guards, that no one might come to her rescue.—*Him that followeth her slay with the sword.* Whoever attempts to kill her here shall be put to death, for, the priest said, let her not be slain in the house of Jehovah.

17. *Jehoiada made a covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people.* The priest received in the name of Jehovah the promise of loyalty of king and people.

18. *The house of Baal.* Built by Jehoram and Athaliah, according to Josephus.—*Thoroughly.* So that they could never be restored.

19. *Carites.* Or, *executioners,* RVm. "These were probably foreign mercenaries from Caria in Asia Minor (they are mentioned by Herodotus as employed by the Egyptian king Psammetichus), who formed the body-guard of the Judean sovereigns" (*Drummelow*).

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

13. *Athaliah.* Athaliah was the only woman who ever reigned in Jerusalem till the accession of the widow of Alexander Jaunæus in the first century before Christ. It is noteworthy that the Phœnician race produced about this time several strong women: Jezebel, Athaliah, Dido. The attractions of culture and the worship which she represented, the support she derived from foreign troops, and the security which she temporarily enjoyed from rebellion through her tolerance of the native religion, could not have existed in so effective a combination without her own strong capacity for organizing. In themselves, therefore, her usurpation and reign are perfectly explicable. The one mystery is why Jehu, in alliance as he was with movements like that of the Rechabites, which had a strong hold on Judah, did not interfere with her. Probably he was too much engrossed by the attacks of the Armenians. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

14. *Treason! Treason!* The vigilance of the tigress had been eluded, and Athaliah had a rude awakening. But she had her mother's courage, and as soon as she heard in the palace the shouts, she dashed to the temple, alone as she was, and fronted the crowd. The sight might have made the boldest quail.

Who was that child standing in the royal place? Where had he come from? How had he been hidden all these years? What was all this frenzy of rejoicing, this blare of trumpets, these ranks of grim men with weapons in their hands? The stunning truth fell on her; but, though she felt that all was lost, not a whit did she blench, but fronted them all as proudly as ever. One cannot but admire the dauntless woman "magnificent in sin." But her cry of "Treason! treason!" brought none to her side. As she stood solitary there, she must have felt that her day was over, and that nothing remained but to die like a queen. Proudly as ever, she passed down the ranks, and not a face looked pity on her, not a voice blessed her. She was reaping what she had sown, and she who killed without compunction the innocents who stood between her and her ambitions, was pitilessly slain, and all the land rejoiced in her death. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Expositions of Scripture.*

16. *And there was she slain.* From this end, so terrible, and merited by her crimes; learn, O king of the Jews, and never forget, that in heaven kings have a severe Judge, innocence an Avenger, and orphans a Father. *Racine,* in *Athalie.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

3. *And Athaliah reigned over the land.* They place no woman upon the throne, for it is said (Dt. 17.15): "Thou shalt in any wise set him king," not queen. So also, in all positions of dignity and authority they place only men. *Maimondes.*

12. *Put the crown upon him.* The original word used here for *crown* is the same as is used to denote the diadem of the high priest, which was a plate of gold tied around the head with a ribbon. Doubtless there were other forms of crowns, as other words are used in various passages. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Manners and Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For many weeks we have been studying the lives of the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel. We now turn to the history of the kings of Judah. We have heard of two good kings of Judah, Asa and Jehoshaphat. Rehoboam, the first king of Judah, had been succeeded by his son Abijah; Abijah by his son Asa; Asa by his son Jehoshaphat.

Our last lesson in the history of Judah (V of First Quarter), was about Jehoshaphat's sending out the princes, Levites and priests with the book of the Law of the Lord to teach the people in all the cities of Judah. In the record of Ahab's reign we learned that Jehoshaphat joined Ahab in his third Syrian campaign, that Ahab was killed in his effort to recover Ramoth-Gilead, and that the prophet Jehu reproved Jehoshaphat for "helping the wicked." A second reform instituted by Jehoshaphat was the appointing of judges. The children of Moab and Ammon and Mount Seir, came to wage battle against Jehoshaphat. The king's prayer seeking help from Jehovah was answered through Jahaziel and he was wondrously delivered from his enemies. Later he joined Jehoram, king of Israel, in an expedition against the Moabites and defeated them.

Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, who had reigned with his father during his later years, and had signalized his power by putting six brothers to death, became sole ruler upon Jehoshaphat's death. "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, for he had the daughter of Ahab (Athaliah) to wife." Trouble came fast upon him. Edom and Libnah revolted from his rule, the Philistines and Arabians invaded the land and took away captive all his sons save Ahaziah, the youngest. A terrible disease seized him and he died, unhonored and unwept. "He departed without being desired."

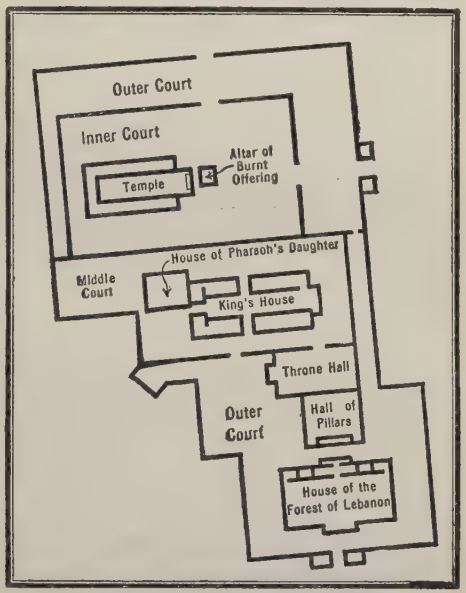
Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead. "He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother (Athaliah) was his counselor to do wickedly." Ahaziah reigned less than a year. He allied himself with Jehoram, king of Israel, in the defense of Ramoth-Gilead, and went down to Jezreel to visit him, when he lay there wounded. There Jehu who had been especially commissioned to cut off the house of Ahab, slew Jehoram, and wounded the fleeing Ahaziah

so that he died on reaching Magiddo. On the way to Samaria Jehu met the relatives of Ahaziah who were coming to pay him a friendly visit at court, and slew them all, forty-two in number.

The death of Ahaziah would have deprived Athaliah of her position as queen-mother had his son succeeded to the throne. She prevented this by destroying, as she thought, "all the seed royal of the house of Judah," and then she usurped the throne. Her reign was the only break in the history of Judah in the succession of kings of the house of David, while in the Northern Kingdom the fourth dynasty now occupied the throne. It seemed as if the promise of God was broken, that promise to David that "his seed shall endure for ever." But God will not suffer His promises to be broken. How His purposes were carried out in the seventh year of her reign our lesson tells.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The scene is Jerusalem. South of the temple area there was a second court in which were the King's House and the House of the Daughter of Pharaoh, while south of this was the Great or Outer Court containing other buildings, as our illustration shows.



Plan of Solomon's Temple and Palaces

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

There are two scenes for your pupils: the saving of the baby prince's life; and the crowning of the boy prince. In the former lay stress upon the aunt's kindness, not upon the grandmother's cruelty: in the latter emphasize the boy's coronation, not the queen's death.

Begin by asking your pupils what a boy needs to make him happy during the first six or seven years of his life. Tell them about Prince Olaf, below. Show them a picture of Baby Stuart, or give each of them a penny reproduction of this picture. Then describe the early life of Prince Joash. Talk about birthdays, and tell your pupils what wonderful thing happened to this little prince on his birthday. Probably he had not known before that he was to be king, nor even that he was a prince. Adapt for your use the second Topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Who is the greatest man in our country's government? In England and in most of the countries of Europe the greatest man is a king, just as in the times of Israel and Judah which we are studying. The oldest son of a king is called the crown prince, because it is expected that after his father's death he will wear the royal crown. The most popular of all the young crown princes in Europe to-day is little Olaf, the six-year-old crown prince of Norway. The people of Norway are very proud of the merry little fellow, and when he visits his grandparents, the King and Queen of England, his visit is made so happy and so much is done for him that his parents fear he will be quite spoiled. They say that the king has given him everything but the crown of England to play with.

There was a little crown prince of Israel, back in the times that we are studying, whose first six years were very differently spent from those of Prince

Olaf. He had neither parents nor grandparents to spoil him, he was never taken away on a visit, and he never had other princes to play with him. His grandmother Athaliah was living, but she did not know that he was alive. Why? How was his life saved?

For Older Pupils. When Mutesa, the ruler of four million subjects in the kingdom of Uganda, British East Africa, died in 1884, it was an anxious time for all who heard the news. The reason is explained by the author of "Uganda's White Man of Work": For generations, the death of a monarch in Uganda had been the signal for robbery and bloodshed. People, sometimes to the number of two thousand, had been captured in the highways and offered as sacrifices at the grave of the dead ruler. Until the chiefs met and chose a new king from among the sons of the late monarch, no one was sure of his life. Upon the crowning of the fortunate prince, all his brothers who had been held as prisoners would be slain except the eldest, who, according to Uganda custom, never sat on the throne.

Several times in the history of Israel we hear of a king's putting all his brothers to death on ascending the throne. To-day we hear of a queen who seeks to establish herself on the throne by destroying "all the seed royal." Who was she? Who were her parents?

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I God's Purposes can not be Frustrated

Of His Kingdom there shall be no End. I shall establish the throne of his kingdom forever, was the promise made to David in 2 S. 7.13. In Abijah's prophecy to Jeroboam, when he told him that he should rule over ten tribes, he said that unto Solomon's son Rehoboam one tribe should be given "that David my servant may have a lamp alway before me in Jerusalem," 1 K. 11.36. In the record of Abijam's reign we read that he did evil, "nevertheless for David's sake did Jehovah his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him," 1 K. 15.4. Jehoram likewise did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. "Howbeit Jehovah would not destroy Judah, for David his servant's sake as he promised him to give unto him a lamp for his children alway." And the light of David's lamp did not fail, for although Athaliah thought she had put to death all of the royal line that Jehu had not slain, one little lad escaped the massacre, and the house of David was protected till the coming of David's Greater Son, to whom the Lord God gave the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end, Luke 1.32,33.

Athaliah thought she had annulled that promise; she thought she had put to death all of the royal line. She doubtless also thought that she could overthrow the worship of Jehovah, that Baal would become the god of the people of Judah. In December, 1906, in a little village on the Baltic, a manifesto was read in all the churches and halls which abolished the rule of the Czar of Russia and of the Lord! God's rule can not thus be overthrown.

God can write Straight on Crooked Lines. You remember how Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt. It was the purpose of his brethren to get rid of him because they were jealous of him and hated him. They wished to do him harm, but it proved a fortunate thing for him that he was thus taken to Egypt, even though he went as a slave, for "the Lord was with him, and the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." It was God's purpose that he should become second only to the Pharaoh of Egypt, and the evil plans of his brothers but furthered His design.

"Doors are opened, ways are made,
Burdens are lifted or are laid
By some great love unseen, the still
Unfathomed purpose to fulfill."

The ancient Portuguese proverb says, God can write straight on crooked lines. Man may attempt to defeat His will, but he never succeeds. The will of God will be done: but great is our loss if we miss the opportunity of doing it, and great is our guilt if we attempt to frustrate it! Teach me to do Thy will.

Lincoln's Faith. "The purposes of the Almighty are perfect and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perfect them in advance." This was Lincoln's faith. On one occasion during the war when the worst fears prevailed, a senator called on the President and said that if only the nation would do right, Providence would restore its unity and prosperity. "My faith is greater than yours," returned Lincoln, with face aglow. "I not only believe that if we do right, God will lead us safely out of this wilderness and restore our dissevered Union, but I also believe that He will compel us to do right in order that He may do these things. Not so much because we desire them, as that they accord with His plans of dealing with this nation, in the midst of which He means to establish Justice. I think He means that we shall do more than we have yet done in the furtherance of His plans, and He will open the way for our doing it."

II A Human Boy

Oh, Glorious to be a Human Boy! Said Mr. Chadband in "Bleak House" to "Poor Joe," "You are a human boy, my friend, a human boy. Oh, glorious to be a human boy!"

"O running stream of sparkling joy
To be a soaring human boy!"

Poor Joe's boyhood was such a hard one. "I've always been a-moving and a-moving on ever since I was born," he said to a policeman. "Where can I possibly move to, sir, more nor I do move?" "Woritted to skin and bones," as he was by his persecutors, Joe nevertheless showed by his pluck what he might have become had his life been spared.

What countless numbers among the world's great men have never known that it was glorious to be a human boy! Henry M. Stanley, who found Livingstone, who rescued Emin Pasha, and whose explorations remade the map of Africa, was another "unfortnet." His father died soon after his birth, and before he was five years old he was placed by an uncle in the workhouse, where he suffered the most cruel, brutal treatment. He had never heard about his mother, but one day a woman visitor was pointed out to him as his mother. "I started with a burning face, and directed a shy glance at her," he said long afterward, "but perceived she was regarding me with a look of cool, critical scrutiny. I had expected to feel a gush of tenderness towards her, but her expression was so chilly that the valves of my heart closed with a snap." Henry finally ran away from the workhouse, but none of his relatives would keep him, and he shipped as a cabin boy on a vessel bound for New Orleans, where he was once more brutally treated. At New Orleans he ran away again, and seeing a pleasant looking man standing in front of a store he asked him if he did not want a boy. This gentleman afterwards adopted him and gave him the name which he made so famous. The two years that intervened before his new father's death were "the golden period of my life," he says; for that brief space he knew that it is glorious to be a human boy.

Probably the little Joash never knew that boyhood was glorious. His aunt had saved him from death and doubtless she and his uncle were kind to him, but the years in hiding must have been dreary ones. What a contrast between such lonely boyhood lives and the lives the boys of our Sunday-school have had!

What will the Boy become? Everything was done just as Jehoiada the priest commanded. Jehoiada brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony, and they made him king. And it was Jehoiada who made the covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people. Will the seven-year-old king keep the covenant with God? Will he rule wisely? We shall see. Just now he is obedient to the will of his uncle the priest, and does whatever he bids him do.

Thus it is with most seven-year-old lads to-day. They obey their parents. But will they keep the covenant with God, and rule themselves wisely when they get older? Dr. C. C. Hall says in "The Silver Cup" that there is a great struggle going on in every child. "You seem to have two lives," he says, "and those lives are fighting each other. One is right, the other is wrong, and both are strong. Some days the first is stronger than the second, and all goes well;

other days the second is stronger than the first, and you have a dreadful time. Sometimes when you know the mild, obedient word ought to be spoken, the hateful, hasty word leaps out instead; and then when you know that hateful word ought to be taken back with sorrow, a wicked, obstinate spirit seems to stand at the entrance of your lip and keep good from coming out. And other days there seems a glorious strength given to the spirit of right within you, and you can be good and gentle, and hold all the wrong in check."

You know the picture of Baby Stuart, Van Dyke's portrait of James II of England as an infant, the charming, round-cheeked baby face with the tight-fitting cap above it. It is said to be the best-known picture in the world: there are two million copies of it in American homes. But did you ever see a portrait of him after he became king? The charm of his infancy was lost as he grew older, the spirit of wrong conquered the spirit of right, and there is little good that can be said about James II who as Baby Stuart seemed to be "trailing clouds of glory."

How can Christ's spirit of right gain the upper hand and control you? What is our Golden Text? Blessed are they that keep His testimony and that seek Him with the whole heart. If we find that Joash kept that covenant with God to which he agreed when he was made king, if he sought Him with his whole heart throughout his life, then the spirit of wrong within him was conquered and the spirit of right always prevailed. So it will be with you. And who is it that will help you conquer in this great struggle?

III Easter Topic The Crowning of Our King

The Resurrection Morning. Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake: for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. And the angel appeared and said unto the woman, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. He is not here, for he hath risen, even as he said. Mt. 28.1-6.

Jesus hath God exalted. For the death of the cross God hath highly exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour. The cross links one to the kingdom—the kingdom lights up the cross! The Saviour comes—the Saviour comes a King! The kingdom that He establishes is full of blessing and love and gentleness, and to us (if we unite the thoughts of cross and crown) there is opened up, not only the possibility of having boldness before Him in the Day of Judgment, but there is opened up this likewise—the certainty that He "shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Oh, remember that as certain as the historical fact He died on Calvary, so certain is the prophetic fact He shall reign, and you and I shall stand there! *Alexander Maclaren*, in *Expositions*.

Live forever, Glorious King!

Say, "Live forever, glorious King;
Born to redeem, and strong to save!"
Then ask, "O Death, where is thy sting?
And where thy victory, boasting Grave?" *Isaac Watts.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

I read my newspaper in order to see how God governs the world. *John Wesley.*

True statesmanship consists in discovering the way in which God is going, and getting things out of the way for Him. *Frank Gunsaulus.*

What are all our histories, but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken and tumbled down and trampled upon everything that He had not planted? *Oliver Cromwell.*

There is a resurrection of acts as well as of bodies. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Sin let loose speaks punishment at hand. *Cowper.*

I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Ps. 23.4.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

It teaches us how God watches over His purposes and their instruments when they seem nearest to failure, for one poor infant was all that was left of the seed of David; and how, therefore, we are never to despair, even in the darkest hour, of the fulfillment of His promises.

It teaches us how much one brave, good man and woman can do to change the whole face of things, and how often there needs but one man to direct and voice the thoughts and acts of the silent multiude, and to light a fire that consumes evil. *Alexander Maclaren,* in the *Second Book of Kings.*

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

When King Ahaziah died, Athaliah, his mother, had all those in the royal line of succession put to death that she herself might seize the throne. Six years she reigned, ignorant of the fact that her plans had been frustrated by Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister, and her husband Jehoiada, the priest. They had stolen away Joash, one of Ahaziah's sons, and had hidden him at first in the store-room where mattresses and cushions that served for beds were kept, and then had kept him and his nurse hidden in the temple.

In the seventh year Jehoiada revealed the royal prince to the chief officers of the army and unfolded to them skillfully made plan to place him on the throne. They obeyed his every command. On the Sabbath, the troops who needed weapons were provided with spears and shields that had been stored in the temple by David, and all were ranged in lines along the temple porch enclosing a space between it and the altar into which the young prince was brought. There a crown was placed on his head, the roll of the law was put into his hand, and he was anointed king.

"Long live the king!" the people shouted, and their acclamations reached the queen in her palace. Unattended she rushed to the temple, and beheld the young king standing by the altar, and heard the blowing of trumpets, and the shouts of the people. "Treason! treason!" she cried, but no one hastened to her defense. At the command of Jehoiada, the ranks opened to let her pass between them, and when she had gone beyond the temple precincts she was slain. The king was brought to the palace, and all the people rejoiced. Then Jehoiada renewed the covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be loyal to their divine Ruler; the Baal altars and images were utterly destroyed and the worship of Jehovah restored.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jehu's reforms. 2. Joash's inheritance from his ancestors.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Who had first wished to build the temple, and why had he been prevented from building it? (Read 1 Ch. 17.) 2. How had he prepared for the work? (1 Ch. 28.) 3. Who had built the temple? (1 K. 6.14.) 4. Read verses 22-30 of his prayer of dedication, 1 K. 8. 5. How had the temple suffered under Athaliah? (2 Ch. 24.7.) 6. How long did Joash do right? (2 K. 12.2.) 7. What course did he pursue after the death of Jehoiada, and how did he die? (2 Ch. 24.15-27.)

Questions to think about. 1. If a tent or a barn is the only meeting-place that people can afford, does such a place honor God? 2. Is it right to worship in a church that has fallen into decay if the worshippers can afford a beautiful sanctuary? 3. Why did King Joash's first plan for repairing the temple fail? 4. Why did his second succeed? 5. Is it right for a boy to get the better of another boy in trade? 6. Is it right to wrap a letter in a newspaper and pay newspaper postage upon it? 7. Is it right not to pay car fare if the conductor does not ask for it?

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of "The Childhood of Joash" in four Scenes: 1, Saved from Death; 2, Crowned King; 3, Athaliah Slain; 4, The Worship of Baal destroyed.

LESSON IV—APRIL 23

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE

Golden Text

Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly. 1 Chron. 29.9.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings, 11.21-12.16; 2 Chron. 24.1-14. Joash Repairs the Temple. **T.** 2 Chron. 24.15-22. The Ingratitude of Joash. **W.** 2 Kings 12.17-21; 2 Chron. 24.23-27. The Bad Ending of a Good Beginning. **T.** 1 Sam. 31.11-13. The Bad End of Saul's Good Beginning. **F.** Judg. 16.1-31. The Bad End of Samson's Good Beginning. **S.** 2 Chron. 33.1-20. The Repentance of Manasseh, **S.** 2 Kings 22.1; 23.21-30. A wholly Consistent Godly Life. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 11.21-12.16 PRINT 12.4-15 COMMIT v. 11

4 And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the hallowed things that is brought into the house of Jehovah, in current money, the money of the persons for whom each man is rated, and all the money that it cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of Jehovah, 5 let the priests take it to them, every man from his acquaintance; and they shall repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. 6 But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. 7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the *other* priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore take no *more* money from your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. 8 And the priests consented that they should take no *more* money from the people, neither repair the breaches of the house.

9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of Jehovah: and the priests that kept the threshold put therein all the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah. 10 And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of Jehovah. 11 And they gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah: and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house of Jehovah, 12 and to the masons and the hewers of stone, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house of Jehovah, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. 13 But there were not made for the house of Jehovah cups of silver, snuffers, basins, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah; 14 for they gave that to them that did the work, and repaired therewith the house of Jehovah. 15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to give to them that did the work; for they dealt faithfully.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

4. *Jehoash.* Another form of *Joash.*—*All the money of the hallowed things.* The money set apart for the purposes of the Sanctuary.—*In current money.* The money was not coined, but was in ingots or rings valued according to weight. (Instead of "In current money" the margin gives the reading "Even

the money of every one that passeth the numbering," which then refers to the half-shekel paid by every Israelite above twenty enumerated in the census, Ex. 30.11-16: see 2 Ch. 24.6-9).—*The money of the persons for whom each man is rated.* Heb. *Each man the money of the souls of his estimation,* RVm. The money paid for the redemption of vows: Lev. 27.2-8. "In this case the priest had to fix the sum to be paid according to the sex, age, etc., of the one who had made the vow," (*Lange*).—*The money that it cometh into any man's heart to bring.* Voluntary offerings, Lev. 22.18.

5-17. Compare the somewhat different account given in 2 Ch. 24.4-14.

5. *Let the priests take it to them, every man from his acquaintance.* "The priests and Levites were sent through the whole land to ask half a shekel from each person for the furniture and restoration of the temple, which had been broken up by Joram and Athaliah and her sons" (*Josephus*). At first Jehoash depended upon the priests to carry out his plan of restoration.—*Breaches.* Time and neglect had caused the walls to crack and crumble.

7. *Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?* "There can be no doubt that with the decay of the house of the Lord, the decrease of the offerings had also taken place. The priests and Levites had perhaps found much difficulty in increasing the sums collected, and in apportioning what they received between their own maintenance and the restoration fund. There seems to have been no blame attached to them by the king, and the explanation they offered, whatever it may have been, was so far satisfactory that the priests who kept the door of the house were placed in charge of the box that was provided for the offering" (*Lumby*).—*Now therefore take no more money from your acquaintance.* The priests were no longer to go throughout the land to collect the money, but it was to be publicly offered when the people came to Jerusalem to worship.

8. *The priests consented.* They were evidently glad to be relieved of the burden.

9. *A chest.* The "treasury" of Mk. 12.41.—*The altar.* The brazen altar of burnt offerings outside the temple.

10. *They saw that there was much money in the chest.* The weight of the chest would tell them this.—*The king's scribe.* Or, *secretary,* RVm.—*Counted the money.* The value was learned by weighing the bags.

12. *Was laid out.* Heb. *went forth,* RVm.

13. *There were not made.* "2 Ch. 24.14 has 'were made,' perhaps having in view the surplus remaining after the repairs of the temple were completed" (*Dummelow*).

15. *They reckoned not.* 2 K. 22.7.

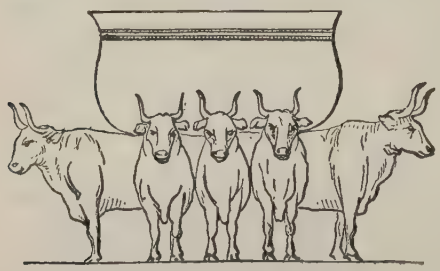
16. *It was the priests's.* According to the law, Lev. 7.7.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

4. *And Jehovah said.* Partly depleted by the exactions of Shishak, King of Egypt, the temple treasuries were refilled by Asa, and emptied again by the same king for tribute to the king of Aram: fluctuations which, as we shall see, happened frequently in the course of the history. The king had as ready a command over the treasuries of the temple as he had over those of the palace, but when he drew them to meet emergencies, he seems as soon as possible to have filled them once more. At least there was always treasure in the temple to meet fresh emergencies. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

9. *The house of Jehovah.* The general outlines of the temple are distinctly drawn in the narrative in First Kings. At the western end of the sacred structure was a cubical enclosure about thirty-five feet square; this was the heart of the temple, for it was set apart as the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and was known as the Oracle. By later generations it was appropriately called the Holy of Holies. The Ark, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, was placed in the center; and on either side towering seventeen feet high, stood the cherubim, made of olive-wood and overlaid with gold. Their outstretched wings were each about nine feet in width and touched the wall on either side, meeting in the center over the Ark; in form and significance they probably

corresponded to the great collossi which guarded the entrances to the ancient Assyrian palaces. The references to Jehovah "who dwelleth in thick darkness" (1 K. 8.12) suggest that the Oracle was lighted only as the olive-wood doors were opened which led into the large room in front. The latter corresponded to an audience chamber in the palace of an earthly king: it was of the same width as the Oracle, but about fifty feet in height and seventy in length. The walls of the temple were of hewn stone, and according to Ezekiel, about ten feet in thickness on the ground, and on the outside a cubit less for each higher story. Light was admitted into the outer sanctuary by windows on both sides placed close up under the ceiling; the roof was probably flat, and projected so as to keep the rain from beating in through these apertures. Immediately in front of the entrance to the Oracle stood the little altar of cedar-wood, on which was placed the shrew-bread. Great square doors led from the large audience room to the porch, which was of the same width as the temple, and about sixteen feet in length. At the entrance stood two huge, hollow, bronze pillars, about thirty feet high and nearly sixteen feet in diameter.



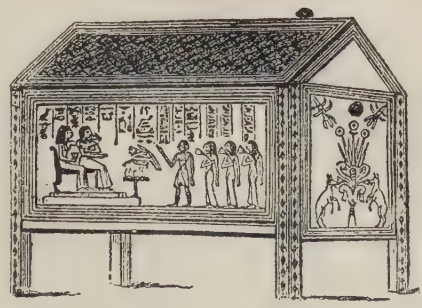
Supposed Profile of the Brazen Sea

Immediately in front of the temple, which faced the east, was placed the large bronze altar which was used for the sacrifices. Near by, to supply water needful for purification, stood a great brazen sea, which was nearly nine feet high and over fifty feet in circumference; it was supported by twelve bronze oxen. On three sides of the temple was built a series of chambers, three stories in height. The entrance was from the south side. Stairs led up from the lower to the higher rooms, which were used for storing the wardrobes of the priests and the vessels employed in the ritualistic service. *Charles Foster Kent,* in *History of the Hebrew People.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

4. *The money of the persons for whom each man is rated.* The government of Syria to-day derives its income from three main sources: First, tax on imports and exports; second, on property; third, on male persons of a certain age. This third, from which Muhammadans are exempted, but at which all others are rated, is called a poll or personal tax, and is levied on male persons; but when a man should begin or when he should stop paying this personal tax is left to the varying judgment of the representatives of the heads of the fathers of families (2 Ch. 19.8). These "heads" sometimes differ, then make a compromise, and rate the person at half the whole amount. A boy remains free until about the age of ten, then he is taxed for either half or the whole of the amount. Henceforth he becomes "reckoned," and passes into the division of men who are called "numbered," "reckoned," or "counted" for taxing purposes. At the age of between sixty and seventy, or if he becomes bodily disabled, he ceases to be taxed, and thus passes out of the numbered. It may happen that additional taxes have to be raised for special purposes. In such cases, the numbered, or reckoned, have the additional burden. Non-Muhammadan ecclesiastical establishments are on the voluntary principle, and derive their revenues from vows and gifts. Two plates are placed at the church door, one for the benefit of the priest, and the other for the church fund. The priest comes and empties his into his pocket, while the church plate is taken by the stewards and the money poured into the box of the church through a hole in the lid. The money then cannot be taken out until all the stewards are present to apply their respective keys, for the box has as many locks as there are stewards. *Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie,* in *Sunday-School Times.*

10. *Put up in bags.* Money was kept in the royal treasuries in bags, the value of the contents first ascertained and marked upon each bag, which was then sealed. Thenceforth, as long as the seal remained unbroken, the bag was estimated at its marked value, without recounting. This was customary in ancient Egypt, and is still the usage in Persia and in other parts of the East. Private bankers pursue a similar plan, so that in some parts of the Levant a "purse" is the word used for a particular sum of money. These bags are made of cotton cloth. *James M. Freeman, Bible Manners and Customs.*



Egyptian Chest

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Joash reigned forty years, and as long as Jehoiada the priest lived to instruct him he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. While he made no effort to restrict the worship to the temple at Jerusalem, allowing the people to offer sacrifices elsewhere, his first decided act as a young king was to make plans for the restoration of the temple.

The weakness of Joash is seen as soon as the aged priest died. Then the king hearkened unto the princes and allowed them to serve the Asherim and other idols, and when Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, reproved them, the king ordered him stoned to death. "Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son." The Syrians invaded the land and captured Gath, but were bought off from attacking Jerusalem by Joash with "the hallowed things" in the temple. His end followed soon after, for his own servants murdered him in his bed. The Chroniclor concludes his account of Joash's reign with these words: Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid upon him, and the rebuilding of the house of God, behold, they are written in the commentary of the book of the Kings.

The planning for the rebuilding of the house of God in Jerusalem occupied many years of Joash's reign. It is the only event which the writer of Kings records. Having sworn to the covenant on his accession, the king's duty naturally was to repair the temple, the visible sign of the covenant, which to the people was God's dwelling-place among them.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Older pupils need to understand the details of this lesson in order to grasp its full meaning, but in teaching it to your pupils you will not attempt any explanation of the first verse, for you will not teach the text in full. The facts for your pupils are these: The temple needed repairing; almost the first thing that the boy king, Joash, did was to ask the priests to collect money for its repair; years passed and nothing was done; then the chest with the hole in the top was put at the entrance of the temple; the people gave willingly, the money was paid out to the workmen, and the house of God was restored. Compare the chest to a child's bank. Take for your theme, God loveth a cheerful Giver, telling the story, p. 185.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. What is the title of our lesson? Where was the temple? Who had built it? What king first thought of building it? What were his reasons for wishing to build it? Why was he not permitted to carry

out his wish? What promises were made to him which more than consoled him for having to give up his wish? (1 K. 5-8.)

The Spaniards have a great church called the Escurial which they say is like the temple of Solomon. In front of it is "the Court of Kings" where there are great statues erected to the kings of Judah who were connected with the building and restoring of Solomon's temple: "David, the Proposer; Solomon, the Builder; Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, the Purifiers and Restorers."

How old was Joash when he was made king? Where had he lived before this event? Perhaps, young as he was, he had already noticed how the temple was falling in places, and how much it needed repair. How soon it was after he became king that he gave orders to collect money for its restoration, we do not know. How did he first plan to get the money?

For Older Pupils. Last week we compared the slaying of the king's son on the death of Ahaziah to the expectation of similar murders that prevailed in Uganda when King Mutesa died. The child Joash was saved from death and made king when seven years of age, and we wondered what sort of king he would be.

Let us see how Mutesa's successor ruled. "Mwanga was a lad about eighteen years of age. During Mutesa's reign he had occasionally visited the missionaries. 'If you should become king on your father's death, how will you treat us?' Mr. Ashe had once asked him when the boy was paying a visit to the missionaries. 'I shall like you very much, and show you every favor,' was the reply. However, it spoiled Mwanga to be king of Uganda. During Mutesa's lifetime, his sons had no power, living lives but little better than those of the ordinary blacks; now, while still only a boy, Mwanga was made the great king of Uganda, and he knew no one in all the world so powerful as himself. He began to show all his father's weaknesses without any of his strong points. Instead of being the real ruler of Uganda, he soon became the slave of his *Katikiro* (prime minister). The Katikiro hated the missionaries exceedingly, and it did not take long for Mwanga to catch their spirit and to be ready to follow their leading."

A study of the entire life of Joash leads us to think that he was much like Mwanga, the slave of his Katikiro, or rather priest, Jehoiada. Only Jehoiada, unlike Mwanga's Katikiro, was a righteous man, and as long as he lived and governed Joash, the king ruled uprightly. When he died, Joash became the slave of unprincipled princes, and his reign closes in sin and ignominy.

The one great deed of King Joash is our theme to-day.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Business Principles applied to Religious Affairs

Stimulating Giving. Early in his reign Joash began to have collections raised for the repair of the temple, but when he had been reigning twenty-three years no repairs had yet been made. The priests had gone from house to house and had collected what they could, but the people had not given willingly. The givers had no assurance that others were deeply interested in the work nor that it would ever be carried out. Possibly, too, they were not assured that any of the money would be used for the purpose. Then a new arrangement was made. The chest with the hole in it for contributions was placed where all could see it, and the people were encouraged to give by seeing others give. The impulse to give became a great popular movement; they saw that the plan of repairing the temple was going to succeed, and their zeal increased accordingly. They saw the money weighed and put into bags in a business-like way, with systematic oversight, the money for the priests was kept separate from that for the temple, and the success of the undertaking was known to be assured.

When Paul made his great collection for the church at Jerusalem, he knew the value of united effort. He wrote to the Corinthians and told them how magnificently the churches of Macedonia had responded to the same appeal. "According to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord." You recall how publicly and impressively

each group of churches sent their money by delegates who met Paul at different points on his way and accompanied him to Jerusalem.

The Sons of this World are Wiser than the Sons of the Light. Christ gave the parable of the Unrighteous Steward and then commanded the steward for his forethought, his wisdom in preparing for the future. The parable shows Christ's thought that money should be used for the good of others and for the advancement of God's kingdom, and that money so used is treasure laid up in heaven for the giver. In connection with the parable Christ added these significant words: The sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light. That is, worldly people are wiser in their dealings with other worldly people than spiritually-minded people in their dealings with spiritual interests.

Why should men and women who conduct their business on wise, business-like methods not use wise, business-like methods in their conduct of religious affairs? Why should their giving, for example, ever be spasmodic? Why should it depend on sentiment or "feeling"? Stonewall Jackson thought it should not. The telegraph lines were down and the people of Lexington, his home, were anxiously awaiting news of the second battle of Bull Run. A letter came to the Post-Office addressed in the general's handwriting. The news spread, and every one was impatient to hear what he had written. This was the letter: "Dear Pastor, I remember this is the day for the collection for foreign missions. Inclosed please find my check. T. J. Jackson."

Building Churches in London. Let me tell you how, with all the business capacity we can exercise, we administer the "Bishop of London's Fund" in the name of God and for the sake of the people. We do not trust it to one or two individuals. We have a body of laymen and clergymen, some of the most experienced in London, and we have the best financial advice. We study every parish; we have expert knowledge of every district where a church is wanted, and by these means during the last forty years we have built two hundred and twenty churches down in the growing parts of London. Therefore you need not be afraid that money would be wasted. We must be business-like. "Be good bankers until I come," is the literal translation of one of our Lord's sayings. And we do not think it unspiritual, that not a penny should be wasted of the Lord's money in fostering these spiritual centers which are the hope of London today. *The Bishop of London,* in an *Address to Business Men.*

II Offered Willingly

Our Golden Text. It is taken from the account of the offerings brought for the temple before Solomon was made king. I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the aged king David told the people. Stating what he had prepared, he added: Moreover, also, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, seeing that I have a treasure of mine own of gold and silver, I give it unto the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house. He appealed to the people with this result: Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to Jehovah: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy. How the thought of *willingness* is emphasized!

When the temple was finally repaired under Joash, "the money that it cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of Jehovah" came quickly and willingly, and again the people rejoiced.

Doctor Maclaren remarks somewhere that in the Christian experience "offered willingly" is almost tautology, for unwilling offerings are a contradiction, and, in fact, there are no such things: the quality of unwillingness destroys the character of the offering and robs it of all sacredness. Reluctant Christianity is not Christianity. That noun and that adjective can never be buckled together.

God loveth a Cheerful Giver. A long story comes from Norway which I condense for you. It is about a young girl who lived opposite an orphan home, and daily passed the box at the outer gate over which were words in Norwegian that meant "God loveth a cheerful giver." Often she would watch to see some one drop in his money, for she wanted to look into his face and

see how happy he would look. But she never chanced to see any one put in even a penny. Then one day a thought suddenly came to her: "Why can't I put in a penny? Why can't I be the cheerful giver and feel the happiness?" She could hardly wait for the day to come when she would receive her weekly allowance of a penny, but when it did come she wanted to buy something with it for herself. Week after week she had a struggle with herself deciding whether or not she could give the penny cheerfully, and then at last she concluded that she could never win God's love in this way.

Summer came, and an uncle visited her home. He gave her a bright new silver Krone, or quarter. Never in all her life had she possessed so much money! She lay awake all night planning what she would do with it, and, in the morning she slipped it into the box. But she did not feel happy; she who had so long been reluctant to part with her penny could not call herself a cheerful giver.

Christmas time came and the box was opened. One of the orphans told her about it. "Just think, there was a whole Krone in it besides the pennies, a bright new one. I wonder who could have been so kind and generous?" The giver ran merrily away. "You can't tell how happy I was," she said afterwards; "I knew then what those words meant, God loveth a cheerful giver!"

III Upright Dealing

They dealth faithfully. As soon as the chest was full its contents were put up in bags and their value marked thereon. Then the bags were handed over to certain men who paid the money out to the overseers and contractors who had charge of the workmen. These treasurers, as we may call them, were known to be men of such integrity, that no account was demanded of them of the way in which they discharged their part of the work. What a splendid testimony this to their reputation for upright dealing!

In every community there is many a man to-day of whom others say, "I would trust that man just as soon as I would myself." He is known to be so thoroughly upright that he would be trusted implicitly with any sum of money, an accounting would be required for business reasons, but not as proof of his honesty.

Such a reputation every Christian should have. "I have charge of thousands of men," said a Japanese army contractor; "I do everything in my power to awaken their sense of honor; but the only men that I can trust without watching are those who have accepted the Jesus teaching."

Upright Dealing with Corporations. Have you never heard people who would scorn to steal five cents from another's purse, openly boast of having eluded paying the nickel car-fare? The little daughter in a family in New York who are not poor—they pay fifteen hundred a year for their rent—is given five cents to ride to school on stormy days, according to *"Young People,"* but is told not to pay the conductor if she can help it. The child tells her young companions that when the conductor fails to collect her fare she does not return it to her mother, but spends it for her own purposes. The mother, perhaps, does not think she is committing any crime. But the child sees that there is no moral difference between deceiving her mother and robbing the street railway.

Upright Dealing in Literary Work. In the matter of thought or literary work, many are less strict in their regard for other's possessions than in the matter of money or poultry or dry-goods. But there is no good reason why this should be so. Using as one's own, *without consent or due credit,* the literary work of another, is certainly dishonesty. Such an act is equivalent to stealing, or worse, for the thing taken has a cash value, and, in addition to this, it involves reputation and intellectual credit. Ordinarily, the person doing it knows that his act is a dishonest one, but he does not expect to be found out. *Sunday-School Times.*

A Psychological Mystery. In reporting to the State Sunday-School Association, each school is asked to give so much to the work per enrolled pupil, and this tends to reduce the enrollment. But when this same school reports to the denomination to which it belongs, where its report will be published

alongside that of other schools, and where no contribution is asked for on the basis of enrollment, its membership seems to increase! Strange, isn't it? *E. A. Fox,* in *Pilgrim Teacher.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

"Everybody's business is nobody's business."

There is one temple whereof I am custodian and votaress; of its services, devotions, worship, I alone shall have to render an account. *Christina Rossetti.*

He gives nothing but worthless gold
Who gives from a sense of duty. *Lowell.*

It is better to be faithful than famous. *Theodore Roosevelt.*

"There is a so-called giving that is really extracting, and extracting is usually an unpleasant operation."

He gives twice that relieves speedily. *Jeremy Taylor.*

Them that honor me I will honor. 1 S. 2.30.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Give regularly and willingly for the maintenance of your church.

There is no house of God, no temple or church, whose keeping in repair so honors God as does the keeping in repair of our hearts which are God's true temples. Are all evil things swept from your temple? Is it worthy of God's presence?

Strive to cultivate a keen sense of honor and of honesty. Deal uprightly in all things.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Systematic giving.
2. Embezzlement of public funds.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What is known about the prophet Jonah? (2 K. 14.25 and clipping, p. 38.) 2. What is known about the writer of the Book of Jonah? (Clipping, p. 38.) 3. What does the book itself indicate as to the date of composition? (Clipping, p. 38.) 4. What great truths does the book teach? (Clipping, p. 40.) 5. What is the story? (Clipping, p. 38.) 6. What two views are held in regard to the book? (Clipping, p. 39.) 7. How was God's first message to Jonah received? 8. How did Jonah attempt to flee from God's presence? 9. What is said in Psalm 139.7-12 and Jer. 23.23-24 about the impossibility of escaping from His Spirit? 10. What happened during the tempest? 11. After it? 12. In the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, what words of the householder might well be asked of Jonah? (Mt. 20.15.) 13. What can you learn about Nineveh? (Clipping, p. 191.) 14. What is the prophecy in regard to Nineveh of Zeph. 2.13-15? 15. What reference did Jesus make to Jonah? (Mt. 12.39-41; 16.4; Lk. 11.29-32.)

Questions to think about. 1. Why was Jonah angry, 4.1? 2. What great prophet had prayed, like Jonah, that he might die? 3. How did Elijah's wish for death differ in its occasion from that of Jonah's? 4. How did Jonah show rebelliousness? Self-sacrifice? Selfishness? Bigotry? Cowardliness? Courage? Pettiness? Truthfulness? Obedience? Pride? Contemptibleness? 5. Why did the people of Nineveh put on sackcloth? (Clipping, p. 190.) 6. Why were the beasts made to fast? (Clipping, p. 189.) 7. Who were meant by the "six-score thousand persons...hand," 4.11? 8. What is your class doing for foreign missions?

Note-Book and Memory Work. In your Book of the Kings of Judah, finish your account of Joash in two sections one entitled The Repairing of the Temple, and the other, The Close of Joash's Reign.

Commit to memory the latter part of Jonah 4.2, and Jn. 3.16.

LESSON V—APRIL 30

GOD'S PITY FOR THE HEATHEN

(Foreign Missionary Lesson.)

Golden Text

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. Mt. 28.19.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Jonah 1.1-16. Jonah Thrown Overboard. **T.** Jonah 2.1-10. Jonah's Prayer. **W.** Jonah 3.1-10. The Repentance of Nineveh. **T.** Jonah 4.1-11. Why God Spared Nineveh. **F.** Matt. 12.38-45. The Men of Nineveh shall Stand up in Judgment. **S.** Ps. 96.1-13. Say among the Nations the Lord Reigneth. **S.** Matt. 28.1-29. The Great Commission. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Jonah 3.1-4.11 PRINT 3.5-4.11 COMMIT 4.10-11

5 And the people of Nineveh believed God: and they proclaimed a fast
and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.
6 And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne,
and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
7 And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree
of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock,
taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8 but let them be covered
with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God; yea,
let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his
hands. 9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away
from his fierce anger that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that
they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said
he would do unto them; and he did it not.

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed
unto Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when
I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew
that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in
lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3 Therefore now, O Jehovah,
take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.
4 And Jehovah said, Doest thou well to be angry? 5 Then Jonah went out
of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth,
and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the
city.

6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah,
that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So
Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the gourd. 7 But God prepared a worm
when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered.
8 And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east
wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested
for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.
9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he
said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. 10 And Jehovah said, Thou hast
had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it
grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: 11 and should not
I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore
thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left
hand; and also much cattle?

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *Jonah.* The son of Amittai, who lived in the time of Jeroboam II, 2 K. 14.25. See p. 38 of THE GUIDE.—*The second time.* See Jonah 1,1-2.

2. *Preach.* Or, *cry,* RVm.

3. *An exceeding great city.* Heb., *a city great unto God,* RVm. See v. 11.—*Of three days' journey.* In width. A day's journey was probably about twenty miles.

5. *Believed God.* Believed that Jonah told the truth, and God would destroy Nineveh.—*Put on sackcloth.* See p. 190.

6. *He arose from his throne, and put his robe from him.* These details are given to make more impressive the king's mourning.—*Sat in ashes.* A customary token of mourning.

7. *Published.* Heb. *said,* RVm.

8. *Both man and beast.* "Neglected by their owners, the cattle fill the air with their groanings. Compare Joel 1.20. The Persians are said, by Herodotus, to have clipped the hair of the horses and baggage animals that they might seem to share in the mourning for a general," (*Dummelow*).—*Turn every one from his evil way.* "Even the Assyrian idolater is represented as realizing the essential requirements of the God of the Hebrews" (*Eiselen*).

9. *Who knoweth whether.* Perhaps.

10. *God repented of the evil.* Changed His purpose in regard to the evil. God is here spoken of in terms that would befit man. Compare Jer. 18.8.

1. *Jonah was angry.* See p. 190.

2. *I hastened to flee. Was beforehanded in fleeing,* RVm. See 1.3.—*For I knew.* "His conviction as to what God would do arose from his knowledge of the divine character" (*Eiselen*). "I knew that if I came here and preached, God would not do what I told them He would do, and I should be left in the position of a false prophet" (*Abbott*).

3. *Therefore now.* Since he would be considered a false prophet.—*Take my life from me.* Take away my life, Elijah had prayed, 1 K. 19.4, but for a very different reason: as Dr. George Adam Smith says, Elijah was jealous *for* Jehovah, while Jonah was jealous *of* Him.

4. *Doest thou well to be angry?* Compare Mt. 20.15: Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good! "*Art thou greatly angry?*" is the alternative reading given in the margin.

5. *Booth.* Roughly made of poles and leaves.

6. *Gourd.* Or, *Palma Christi,* RVm. "Most likely the bottle-gourd, often planted to grow over trelliswork, whose broad leaves would form a good protection against the sun."

8. *Sultry east wind.* The sirocco, which came from the deserts of burning sand on the east.

9. *Angry for the gourd.* "Jonah transfers his pity for himself, as an ill-used prophet, to the gourd which like-wise has been hardly treated. A wonderfully true touch of human nature," (*Dummelow*).

10. *Which came up in a night.* Literally, "a child of the night," a poetical antithesis to "perished in a night."

11. *That cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand.* Very young children.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FOR HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time.* It is God's custom when He gives a servant a command to a definite duty, and the servant disobeys, and, by the goodness of his God after his fall and repentance is brought back to himself and to readiness to obey, that the old command is invariably repeated. It is the one condition upon which the Christian can hope to make progress in his spiritual life as in his Christian service. It is the crux of his faith. The thing which he refused to do, he must do, if he is to know himself and to win either strength or peace for the future. *Henry A. Stimson,* in *The New Things of God.*

4. *Nineveh shall be overthrown.* If in the spirit of sympathy a preacher tells a young man that he is going to darkness and destruction, and if the word by its tone and truth arrests the attention and quickens the conscience of that young man so that he turns his face toward the light of heaven and the love of Jesus, is not the prohpecy fulfilled? Yes, it is fulfilled in the truest, noblest

sense, it has entered into the young man's life. *W. G. Jordan,* in *Prophetic Ideas.*

1. *It displeased Jonah exceedingly.* Here was a triumph for Jonah—alone, and with no human help, he had terrified and converted the greatest city in the world. Even egotism, if humanized by benevolence, could have found gratification in this. But poor Jonah was all egotism. A witty Frenchman has defined an egotist as a character who will burn down another man's house to cook himself two eggs. Jonah was quite up to the mark of this definition. He would have burned down a populous and penitent city to enjoy his one egg, the *amour propre* of a seer. *Charles Reade,* in *Bible Characters.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIGHT

3.5. *Put on sackcloth.* The mourning dress, sackcloth, was in truth a sack, which was thrown over the person and extended down to the knees, but which, nevertheless, had armholes for the admission of the arms. It derives its name from the Arabic verb *to tear asunder,* because in the moment of the person's grief it was torn from the neck down to the breast, and sometimes as far as the girdle. The materials were a coarse dark cloth of goat's hair. *B. A. John.*

4.1. *It displeased Jonah exceedingly.* We have not been trained to believe ourselves an elect people; nor have we suffered at the hands of the heathen. Yet, at least, we have contemporaries and fellow-Christians among whom we may find still alive many of the feelings against which the Book of Jonah was written. Take the Oriental churches of to-day. Centuries of oppression have created in them an awful hatred of the infidel, beneath whose power they are hardly suffered to live. That their oppressors share a common humanity with themselves is a sense they have nearly lost. For centuries they have had no spiritual intercourse with them; to try to convert a Mohammedan has been for 1,200 years a capital crime. It is not wonderful that Eastern Christians should have long lost power to believe in the conversion of infidels, and to feel that anything is due but their destruction. I once asked a cultured and devout layman of the Greek Church, Why then did God create so many Mohammedans? The answer came hot and fast—To fill up Hell! *George Adam Smith,* in *The Minor Prophets.*

4.7. *God prepared a worm.* On warm days when a small rain fell, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers of this plant, which in one night so suddenly and so often cut off its leaves that only their bare ribs remain; which I have often observed with much wonder, as if it were a copy of that destruction of old at Nineveh. *Pusey,* quoted by *Eiselen.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, the son and successor of Joash in Judah, Jeroboam II began to reign in the Kingdom of Israel. Between Ahab, the king of Israel in the time of the prophet Elijah, and Jeroboam II, the king in the time of the prophet Jonah, there were five kings: Ahaziah, whose reign was brief; Jehoram, his brother, who waged wars with the Moabites and with the Syrians; Jehu, the ruthless reformer, who slew Jehoram and exterminated Ahab's house, and who, according to the Assyrian inscriptions, paid tribute to Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king: Jehoahaz, Jehu's son, under whom the northern kingdom was reduced to a subject kingdom of Syria; and Jehoash, in whose reign Israel partly regained her independence.

Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, had a long, prosperous reign, 781-740 B. C. Like Solomon, he aspired to make his kingdom a world-power. He won back the province of Gilead on the east, and extended the borders of his empire "from the entrance of Hamath," the gorge between the Lebanons, to "the Sea of the Arabah," to the lower end of the Dead Sea.

During the reign of Jeroboam II three prophets lived, Jonah, Amos and Hosea. From the Books of Amos and Hosea we gain information concerning the social and moral condition of Israel. Both prophets declare that the nation will be taken captive by a foreign power, in punishment for its perversion of justice and its oppression of the poor.

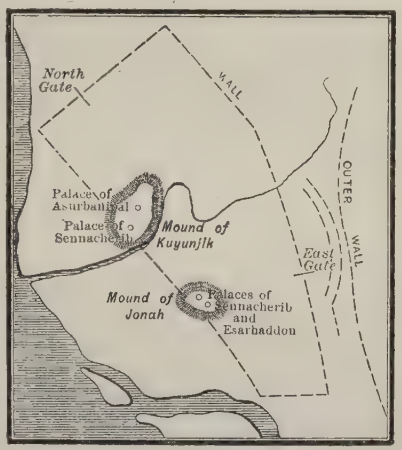
Jonah, the son of Amittai, seems to have been the friend and counselor of

Jeroboam II, 2 K. 14.25. He is the subject, though not the author, of the Book of Jonah. To understand our lesson to-day the entire Book of Jonah must be studied. Turn to pages 38-40 of THE GUIDE and read carefully the information there given in regard to the Book.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Nineveh. Opposite to Mosul, the well-known emporium of trade on the right bank of the Upper Tigris, two high, artificial mounds now lift themselves from the otherwise level plain. The more northerly takes the name of Kuyunjik, or "little lamb," after the Turkish village which couches pleasantly upon its northeastern slope. The other is called in the popular dialect Nebi Yunus, "Prophet Jonah," after a mosque dedicated to him, which used to be a Christian church; but the official name is Nineveh. These two mounds are bound to each other on the west by a broad brick wall, with a circumference in all of about nine English miles. The interval, including the mounds, was covered with buildings, whose ruins still enable us to form some idea of what was for centuries the wonder of the world. Upon terraces and superstructions of enormous breadth rose storied palaces, arsenals, barracks, libraries, and temples. A lavish water system spread in all directions from canals with massive embankments and sluices. Gardens were lifted into mid-air, filled with rich plants and rare and beautiful animals. Alabaster, silver, gold, and precious stones relieved the dullness of brick and flashed sunlight from every frieze and battlement. The surrounding walls were so broad that chariots could roll abreast on them. The gates, and especially the river gates, were very massive.

All this was Nineveh proper, whose glory the Hebrews envied and over whose fall more than one of their prophets exult. But this was not the Nineveh to which our author saw Jonah come. Beyond the walls were great suburbs, and beyond the suburbs other towns, league upon league of dwellings, so closely set upon the plain as to form one vast complex of population, which is known to Scripture as "The Great City." To judge from the ruins which still cover the ground, the circumference must have been about sixty miles, or three days' journey. *George Adam Smith,* in *The Minor Prophets.*



Plan of Nineveh

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Begin with this talk which I condense from "A Missionary Lesson for Little People" written by Lee McCrae for the *Pilgrim Teacher.* Do you know that wherever a yellow dandelion blooms in the grass there comes up, by and by, a queer little puffball on the tall stalk? Did you ever take one and blow it—like this? Then did you watch the feathery bits float in the air, each like a little sailboat, the feathery part sticking up, and the bottom a brown speck the size of a pin-head? Do you know what the speck is? A seed! A dandelion seed!

And it goes sailing, sailing through the air until by and by it drops softly down upon the ground. Then can you guess what the seed does? It begins to grow. It sends tiny roots down into the dirt for food and drink. Pretty soon up comes a baby plant; its tight little leaves begin to uncurl, and right in the middle comes a wee bud—oh, so little! But it grows bigger and bigger every day, and some morning you find a bright yellow star in the grass, shining just like sky-stars shine!

So do you see what you did when you blew the seed-ball? You scattered

the dandelion seeds. You did just what the wind would have done if you had left the feathery thing alone—just what God made the puffball for, to be scattered so that the dandelion stars would not all shine in one place.

God wants every good thing spread abroad, scattered over all the earth. The better anything is the more He wants it to spread. That is why the very last words Jesus said were the words of our Golden Text. What are they?

Then tell your pupils that long before Jesus came God taught the people of Israel that He wanted them to teach other people what they knew about Him. He taught them this in the story of Jonah. God told Jonah to go to the people of Nineveh, who were very wicked, and warn them that they would be punished. Jonah did not want to go. He did not want to spread abroad the good seed; he wanted it all kept in his own country. He knew that God was kind and good, 4.2, and he feared that if he went and told the people of Nineveh that they should be punished they would repent and God would have mercy upon them. God told him a second time to go, and then he obeyed.

After telling the story, dwell upon the last verse, and teach the second topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Raimon Lull was a philosopher and poet of the thirteenth century who felt called to preach to the Moslems in Africa. After spending nine years in mastering the Arabic language, he engaged passage on board a vessel bound for Tunis, but was seized with such terror that he let the vessel sail without him. Then he was overcome with remorse, and, though prostrated by nervous fear, begged to be taken aboard the next vessel. A second time his heart failed him, and remorse tortured him. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," he cried, and his third attempt to sail was successful.

Many centuries before him, a man in the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the name of Jonah was called to preach to the heathen in far distant Nineveh, but he could not bring himself to obey the call. His reason was different from that of Lull's; what was it? Instead of starting eastward, what did he do? Did remorse overtake him? How was he given a second chance?

For Older Pupils. Begin with a consideration of the Book of Jonah as a whole, and then by questions bring out the story of the first two chapters. See p. 38 of The Guide.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Infinite Love and Compassion

The Wideness of God's Mercy. Nowhere in the Old Testament is there a broader conception of the universality of God's love than in this little Book of Jonah. When the ignorant sailors, who in their terror at the storm had called on their gods, turned to Jehovah and promised to worship Him, they were delivered. When the disobedient prophet prayed to Jehovah, he was delivered. And when the wicked Ninevites cried mightily unto God, and turned from their evil way, God delivered them. God's mercy and love extend alike to ignorant sailors, disobedient prophet, and wicked heathen—in a word, to all humanity. Divine pity and tenderness breathes throughout the story, but most all of in those beautiful closing words where they are given to the helpless children and animals in the city of Nineveh. The Book of Jonah tells in story what Faber tells in song:

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea:
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

A Pitying Father. Looking upon the greatest pipe-organ in the world we naturally expect of it an overpowering volume of sound, something like the roar of battle, or the rumble and crash of thunder in the dome of a lurid sky, or the bellowing and booming of billows on the stormy beach or in the caves of hollow cliffs. All this we are prepared for, but we are filled with

delighted wonder when the tremendous instrument checks its awful force, sinks its great voice to strains as gentle as the cooing of doves, as soft and sweet as the song sparrow's notes, as tender as a mother's crooning to her babe. In like manner, but infinitely more, are we filled with amazement when in the austere Old Testament, where God reveals Himself as the almighty and majestic Creator, Lawgiver, and Ruler, we find Him likening Himself to a pitying Father and a comforting Mother. *W. V. Kelly,* in *Ripening Experiences of Life.*

II God's Mercy to Dumb Creatures

God made and loveth All. The lesson that Jonah learns is that the cattle in the city are one reason for God's showing divine mercy to Nineveh. That God cares for the dumb creatures is one of the lessons His Son Jesus Christ taught. Are not five sparrows sold for two pence and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God, He told His disciples. Again He said, Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. And when Jesus says, Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful, He bids us be merciful, not only to one another, but also to the dumb animals.

Domestic Animals, from an Assyrian Bas-Relief

"God made all the creatures, and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign we and they are His children, one family here."

Dr. R. F. Horton recalls the fact that a man had been fined seven shillings for tormenting a rat and comments: The rat is vermin, but the rat has his rights, and the law of England will protect the rat because Christ is behind that law in England. A man may kill a rat, but he may not torment it.

A Badge of Kindness. Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge, Shakespeare tells us. You cannot think of a truly noble man or woman or child who is not merciful to dumb animals.

One day Abraham Lincoln was riding horseback along a country road with several friends when they noticed two young birds, too young too fly, lying by the roadside. They had been blown out of their nest by a recent storm. Mr. Lincoln dismounted and tied his horse to a tree, while the rest rode on. "Where is Lincoln?" questioned one of the men who had been far ahead, as the other overtook him. "Oh," was the reply, "when I saw him last, he had two little birds in his hand and was hunting for their nest."

A Badge of Cruelty. Women do not know what they are doing when they buy and wear birds and feathers, or they never would do it. How should people brought up in cities know anything of the sacred lives of birds? What woman, whose head is bristling with their feathers, knows, for instance, the hymn of the song sparrows, the sweet jargon of the blackbirds, the fairy fluting of the oriole, the lonely, lovely wooing call of the sandpiper, the cheerful challenge of the chickadee, the wild, clear whistle of the curlew, the twittering of the swallows as they go careening in wide curves through summer air, filling earth and heaven with tones of pure gladness, each bird a marvel of grace, beauty and joy? God gave us these exquisite creatures for delight and solace, and we suffer them to be slain by thousands for our "adornment."

If women only knew these things, there is not one in the length and breadth of the land, I am happy to believe, who would be cruel enough to encourage this massacre of the innocents by wearing any precious rifled plume of theirs upon her person. *Celia Thaxter.*

Bands of Mercy Hints. These bits of advice issued by the American Pro-

tective League of New York, are worthy of your consideration. Be kind and gentle with all animals; never rough nor impatient. Do not allow any one to hurt, tease or frighten any animal. Use your influence and knowledge as much as possible when you find an animal in a bad condition. If a horse is standing uncovered in cold weather, cover him. If his blanket has fallen or blown off, pick it up and put it on him. If you see a horse that has sores or galls under the harness, tell the driver what to do for it, and how to arrange the harness. Get people who drive dock-tailed horses to cover them with fly nets, to prevent madness from flies. Be sure to turn a horse's head away from the sun, or ask the driver to do so. Try to have horses, dogs, and cats watered as often as possible, as it is very important to their usefulness. Urge your friends to treat all animals kindly.

III Go ye therefore and teach all Nations

How God works. When Cary proposed to a number of ministers that they should consider "the duty of Christians to attempt the spread of the Gospel among heathen nations," it is said that Dr. Ryland sprang to his feet in great astonishment and ordered Cary to sit down, saying, "When God pleases to convert the heathen He will do it without your aid or mine." Evidently Dr. Ryland had not read aright the Book of Jonah, nor the commands of Jesus.

The Old Testament and Missions. The Jews had become fully imbued with the Pharisaic ideal. Their leaders had emphasized the call to come out from the nations and to become a peculiar people so long and so urgently that many of the people had come to regard the God of the universe as merely the divinity of the Jewish nation. It was to overcome this Jewish narrowness, to teach that Jehovah is the God and Father of us all, and that Judaism must expand into the universal religion, that the Book of Jonah was written. The whole book is a divine effort to induce a Jew to become an evangelist to the people at Nineveh; it is God's summons to the Jewish people to missionary activity.

If the Old Testament teaches in Genesis the universal creatorship of God; if in the first commandment it demands His worship alone; if in its definition of God it makes Him all in all; if the very name it uses for an idol signifies nothingness; if in Psalms and Prophets it summons all the ends of the earth to praise Him; if it narrates the divine attempt in Ruth and Jonah to turn the Jews from Pharisees into missionaries, then it does not for a moment permit us to rest in the doctrine of the ancient or the modern Pharisees that the kingdom of heaven on earth belongs to a particular race. The missionary character of the Bible inheres in the very texture of the Old Testament. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. *Bishop J. W. Bashford,* in *God's Missionary Plan for the World.*

The Great Commission: Does it Merit the Name? All three Synoptists agree that the first theme of our Lord's instruction to His disciples was the world's evangelization. Neither master, disciple, nor evangelist, however, is responsible for the title by which that final charge has commonly been known. The title is the spontaneous characterization of later ages. How far is it deserved?

I. Great in position. This last command has the advantage of a most emphatic position. It is no less than the last word of Christ to His friends.

II. Great in conception. Consider the vastness of the idea. It is vast as the world, as history, as all human life. "Go ye into all the world:" there go the space limits. "Make disciples of all nations:" there go the race limits. "Preach the gospel to the whole creation," that is, to every man, woman and child who shall be created:" there go the time limits. Surely a charge before which all human boundaries thus fall flat is great in outline and idea.

III. Great in promise. The promise, "I am with you" is obviously not to be dissociated from the command to which it is attached, "Go, and I will be with you." "If you go, I will be with you," it might have been written. Christ has thus attached to the missionary enterprise the altogether most remarkable promise of His personal presence.

IV. Great in authority. "Go!" This word consists of only two letters, but it contains the power of two worlds. We may not say, perhaps, that there is

more of heaven's authority behind this command than behind any other: yet this command makes prominent the fact of authority as does no other. From this command the disciples could not but draw the inference that Jesus believed in His own right to command anything.

And is not this the meaning of the prefatory words: "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and on earth:" "All power," the Authorized Version puts it: "All authority," the Revised Version more truly says, the "power" is not absent, but it lurks in the background, while the "right" is brought forward and emphasized. "I have the right of God to command: go, therefore!" Condensed from an article in the *Biblical World* by *Professor John H. Strong.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Unexpansive religion is dying religion. *Bishop Charles H. Brent.*

I maun do as I'm bidden do. *Sandy Scott.*

A wrongdoer is often a man that has left something undone, and not always he that has done something. *Marcus Aurelius.*

There is a magnificent limit to the omnipotence of God—the limit imposed by His love: His power cannot pass the boundaries of His heart. *Matheson.*

Is God the God of Jews only? is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also. Rom. 3.29.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

"I do well to be angry, even unto death," is the way in which Jonah met the loss of the gourd's shade. When Job was overwhelmed with great afflictions, and was told by his wife to "Renounce God and die" he answered, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Which one are you following?

Is there some duty which you are as reluctant to perform as Jonah was to perform his? Learn these words of Phillips Brooks: Come, take that task of yours which you have been hesitating before, and shirking, and walking around, and on this very day lift it up and do it.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

The lesson includes all four chapters of the Book of Jonah. See p. 38.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Book of Jonah, its character and teachings. See pages 38-40.
2. Jonah the typical bigot of all ages.
3. What our church and school are doing for foreign missions.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the parallel account in 2 K. 15.1-7. 2. How old was Uzziah when he began to reign? (2 Ch. 26.3.) 3. How long did he reign? (2 Ch. 26.3.) 4. Who was his father? (2 Ch. 26.1.) 5. His grandfather? (2 Ch. 24.27.) 6. What can you learn about the Philistine cities mentioned in v. 6? (Clipping, p. 199.) 7. About Uzziah's pasture lands? (Clipping, p. 199.) 8. About cisterns in Palestine? (Clipping, p. 198.) 9. About the use of slings? (Clipping, p. 198.) 10. What kind of stones did David require for his sling? (1 S. 17.40.) 11. What was the law in regard to burning of incense? (Num. 18.7.) 12. What two other Bible characters were punished by leprosy for their sins? (Num. 12.10; 2 K. 5-27.)

Questions to think about. 1. What is the meaning of "he was marvellously helped"? 2. What is the meaning of "his heart was lifted up"? 3. Instead of saying, "neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God," how should we express the same thought? 4. Read Longfellow's Sicilian Tale, in Tales of a Wayside Inn, and be able to tell its lesson.

Note-book Work. In your Book of Prophets write the story of Jonah under four headings: A Great Refusal, A Great Deliverance, A Great Repentance, A Great Lesson.

LESSON VI—MAY 7

UZZIAH, KING OF JUDAH, HUMBLED

Golden Text

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 16.18.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 26.1-15; 2 Kings 13.21, 22. Uzziah's Name Spread Abroad. **T.** 2 Chron. 26.16-23. Humbled by Becoming a Leper. **W.** Dan. 4.1-37. The Pride of Nebuchadnezzar Humbled. **T.** Dan. 5.1-31. The Pride of Belshazzar Humbled. **F.** 2 Chron. 32.1-23. The Pride of Sennacherib Humbled. **S.** Acts 12.1-23. The Pride of Herod Humbled. **S.** 1 Pet. 5.1-11. God Giveth Grace to the Humble. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 26 PRINT vv. 8-21 COMMIT vv. 19, 20

8 And the Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad
even to the entrance of Egypt; for he waxed exceeding strong. 9 Moreover
Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate,
and at the turning *of the wall,* and fortified them. 10 And he built towers in
the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle; in the
lowland also, and in the plain: *and he had* husbandmen and vinedressers in
the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry. 11 Moreover
Uzziah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, accord-
ing to the number of their reckoning made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the
officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. 12 The whole
number of the heads of fathers' *houses,* even the mighty men of valor, was two
thousand and six hundred. 13 And under their hand was an army, three hun-
dred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty
power, to help the king against the enemy. 14 And Uzziah prepared for them,
even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and
bows, and stones for slinging. 15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented
by skilful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to
shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad: for he was
marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly,
and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of
Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17 And Azariah the priest
went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant
men: 18 and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth
not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons
of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for
thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God.
19 Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense;
and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his fore-
head before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense.
20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, be-
hold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from
thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him.
21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a
separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah:
and Jotham his son was over the kings house, judging the people of the land.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-23. Read the parallel account in 2 K. 15.1-7.

8. *The Ammonites.* People of Ammon.—*Uzziah.* Called Azariah in Kings.

9. See the Geographical Background.

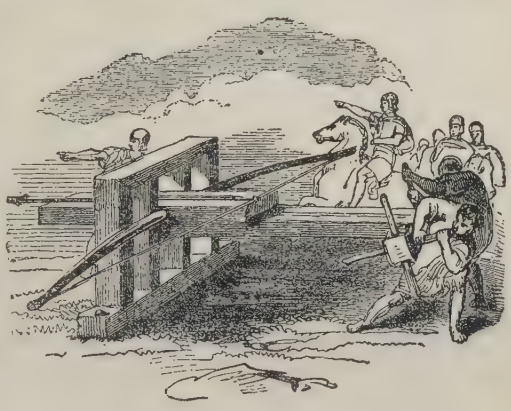
10. *Towers.* Watchtowers were needed because of the marauding Arabs.—*Wilderness.* Lowland. See the Geographical Background.—*Plain. Table-land,* RVm.—*The fruitful field. Carmel;* see 1 S. 25.2, RVm.

11. *Went out to war by bands.* In separate divisions.

13. His army was only 7,500 larger than that of his father, 25.5.

14. *Stones for slinging.* They must be smooth and of a certain size. 1 S. 17.40.

15. *Engines.* Those that discharged stones were afterwards called by the Romans balista, and these that hurled arrows, catapults. —*Battlements. Corner-towers,* RVm.—*He was marvelously helped.* God helped him, v. 7.

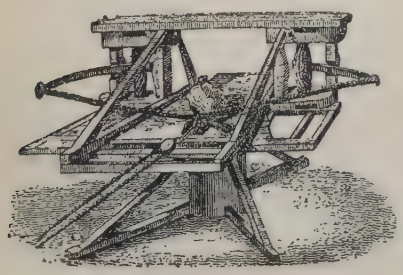


Engine for Shooting Arrows

16. *His heart was lifted up.* Thy heart lifteth thee up to boast, 25.19.—*So that he did corruptly. To his destruction,* RVm.—*He trespassed.* "The Hebrew word implies presumptuous dealing with holy things" (*Barnes*).—*For he went into the temple to burn incense.* It was lawful only for the priests to enter the Holy Place where was the altar of incense, Num. 18.7. See the lesson taught by the history of Korah, Num. 16.

17. *The priest.* High priest, v. 20.

18. *The priests the sons of Aaron. honor.* It shall be for thy dishonor. Ex. 30.7,8.—*Neither shall it be for thine*



Engine for Shooting Arrows

19. *The leprosy brake forth in his forehead.* Heb. *rose,* RVm. So Miriam was punished, Num. 12.10, and Gehazi, 2 K. 5.27.

20. *They thrust him out quickly.* He was now "unclean."

21. *Dwelt in a separate house.* According to the law, Lev. 13.46.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

8. *He waxed exceeding strong.* Those records of Uzziah's activity, in which we have seen no inherent improbability, are confirmed by the evidence of the prophets at the close of that monarch's reign. As we should expect, there is a background of agriculture and pasture to the pictures of the national life presented by Amos and Isaiah. But against that background rises, in a way novel in Israel's history, an extraordinary enterprise in building—the instruments and material of which are used familiarly as religious figures while one of the names 'armon, hitherto limited to royal castles, is applied to private dwellings—with an increase of all manner of wealth and luxury. But these imply a great development of trade; and of this and of the tempers it breeds the prophets give us direct evidence. Amos describes an excessive zeal in buying and selling. Hosea calls Northern Israel a very *Canaan,* or trader. Isaiah says "Judah is filled from the East, she strikes hands with the sons of strangers," and mentions ships of Tarshish and caravans. The sins of trade: the covetousness which oppresses the poor and

threatens the old religious festivals, false weight and lying, are exposed and condemned. Whether Uzziah throughout his long reign remained under that subjection to Northern Israel which was confirmed by Amaziah's defeat at Beth-shemesh, or gradually advanced to more equal relations with Jeroboam II, it is difficult to say. In either case the two kingdoms were at peace, and between them commanded the trade from Elath to the borders of Phœnicia and Damascus. So great a commerce was in the hands mainly of foreigners—Arabs according to Isaiah, and doubtless also Arameans. They must have brought into Judah many foreign products and inventions; also a familiarity with life and institutions in Assyria and Egypt. *G. A. Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

10. *He hewed out many cisterns.* Cisterns abound throughout Palestine. They are not confined to the cities and villages, where they are often built of solid masonry, but are often seen in the most solitary part of the wilderness. These latter consist of a large tank more or less deep in the earth, built around with stone-work, the walls rising several feet above the ground and sometimes roofed. A door in one side of the structure leads down a flight of steps extending even to the bottom of the tank, so that by it the water is always accessible, however high or low it may be in the cistern. *Van Lennep.*

14. *Stones for slinging.* The sling was used in warfare by the Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. Wilkinson, in his account of the ancient Egyptians, thus describes it. The sling was a thong of leather, or string plaited; broad in the middle, and having a loop at one end, by which it was fixed upon and firmly held with the hand; the other extremity terminated in a lash, which escaped from the finger as the stone was thrown: and when used, the slinger whirled it two or three times over his head, to steady it and increase the impetus. The people most renowned for its use were the natives of the Baliaric Islands, who considered the sling of so much importance that the principal care of a parent was to instruct a boy in its use, and he was not permitted to have his breakfast until he had dislodged it from a beam with the sling.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The reigns of three kings of Judah, Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah, covered a century. Joash, you remember, did right as long as the high priest Jehoiada lived, and then he fell under evil influences, and when Zechariah, Jehoiada's son, rebuked him, he had him stoned to death. His own servants put an end to Joash's life, after a reign of forty years. Amaziah, his son, conquered the Edomites, brought back their idols and worshipped them, and challenged and was defeated by Joash king of Israel, who broke down the walls of Jerusalem and despoiled the temple of its treasures. A conspiracy was raised against him and he was assassinated. Then Amaziah's sixteen-year-old son Uzziah was put upon the throne. Forty of his fifty-two years reign' coincides with that of Jeroboam II in Israel, 780-740 B. C. At the death of these two kings each nation, as we know from the writings of the prophets, was at the height of prosperity and pride.

Uzziah's father, Amaziah, had conquered the Edomite foes on the south, and Uzziah's first warfare was against the Philistine foes on the west.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Three cities of Philistia are mentioned in verse 6, as having had their walls broken down by Uzziah. *Gath* was probably on the border of Judah near Ekron; it was utterly destroyed by Assyria shortly before Amos wrote in 750 B. C. *Jabneh,* west of Ekron, had a harbor at the mouth of a river. *Ashdod,* the halfway station between Gaza and Joppa, on the great Egyptian road, was the strongest of all the Philistine cities.

Gur-baal, where the Arabians dwelt, v. 7, must have been in the wilderness south-east of Judah. *Gur* may have meant *Gerar.* The *Meunim* were the native

people who dwelt in the Mt. Seir region, by the Dead Sea. The *Ammonites* belonged on the tableland east of the Jordan Valley. In the desert region south and east of Judah Uzziah built his towns as a defense against the marauding Arabs.

Uzziah added to the fortifications of Jerusalem by building and fortifying towers at *the corner gate,* probably in the northeast, at the *valley gate,* on the south, leading into the Valley of Hinnom, and at the *turning of the wall,* perhaps the south-east corner of the temple area. Dr. George Adam Smith prefers the plural of the Septuagint, turnings of the wall, and says Uzziah built "gate towers and flanking towers at angles where the walls turned round the city or bent with the natural line of rock. Probably this was all that was required on the walls of Jerusalem, which for the most part were planted on the edge of deep ravines high above the reach of breaching engines. Uzziah's flanking towers fully served their purpose. Where before his reign the comparatively small forces of Northern Israel had made a long breach on the northern wall, the only breachable part of the defences, after his reign the engines of Assyria herself failed to effect an entrance."

Three places are mentioned where Uzziah's cattle were pastured: the *desert* (a wilderness with occasional oases) south and southeast of Judah; the *lowland,* or stretch of Low Hills (Heb. Shephelah) between the Central Range or high hills of Judah and the Maritime Plain; and *the plain,* or table-land, east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

At first glance you may think this a difficult lesson for your pupils, but after studying it you will find that it need not be. Begin by telling your pupils Longfellow's Cicilian Tale. Tell it more simply and more graphically than I have told it below. Then tell them how Uzziah was humbled. Do not dwell on the details of the proofs of his prosperity, but emphasize the thought that God prospered him and then he grew proud and failed to obey God's commands. The fable, p. 202, and the way Gypsy Smith keeps from being proud, p. 201, may be followed by questions about the things that might make your pupils proud, and a talk about the fact that possessions are no cause for pride, they are all God's good gifts, just as Uzziah's prosperity came from God.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. King Robert of Sicily once heard the priests at church chanting:

> He has put down the mighty from their seat
> And has exalted them of low degree,

and he muttered scornfully,

> 'Tis well that such seditious words are sung
> Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;
> For unto priests and people be it known,
> There is no power can push me from my throne!

Lulled by the monotonous chant, the impious king fell asleep. When he awoke it was night, and he was in the church alone. He cried and knocked till the sexton came and flung open the door. Clothed in rags, Robert of Sicily sprang out and rushed to the palace.

> There on the dais sat another king,
> Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,
> King Robert's self in features, form and height,
> But all transfigured with angelic light!

"Who art thou? and why com'st thou here?" the Angel King requested. "I am the king, and I come to claim my own from an impostor who usurps my throne." proudly cried Robert. "Nay, not the king, but the king's jester," said the Angel, and Robert was obliged to wear the cap and bells and take his place in the retinue of the king, by courtiers mocked, by pages laughed to scorn,

Often the new king would meet him and ask, "Art thou the king?" and he would fling the haughty answer back, "I am, I am the king."

Three years passed, and a change came over proud Robert. On Easter Sunday

> He felt within a power unfelt before,
> And, kneeling humbly on his chamber floor,
> He heard the rushing garments of the Lord,
> Sweep through the silent air, ascending heavenward,

and when once more the Angel King repeated his question, "Art thou the king?" King Robert meekly answered:

> Thou knowest best!
> My sins as scarlet are; let me go hence,
> And in some cloister's school of penitence,
> Across those stones that pave the way to heaven,
> Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven!

The proud king was humbled. Through the open window they heard the monks chanting:

> He has put down the mighty from their seat,
> And has exalted them of low degree!

The Angel smiled. I am an Angel, and thou art the king! he said, and vanished. When the courtiers came they found king Robert kneeling upon the floor near the throne, absorbed in silent prayer.

You recognize in our story the Sicilian's Tale in Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. It is only a legend, of course. Uzziah, King of Judah, like Robert of Sicily, thought that no power could push him from his throne, and like Robert he was humbled.

(If you have assigned this poem, as suggested last week, let some member of your class tell it.)

For Older Pupils. Which is harder to bear nobly, prosperity or adversity? What are some of the temptations of the prosperous? What are some of the temptations of the unprosperous? What is the difference in kind of the temptations which the two have to fight against? Was Carlyle right when he said that for one who can stand prosperity one hundred can stand adversity? Let us see how Uzziah stood his prosperity, and then return to these questions.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Bearing Prosperity

His Heart was lifted up. Uzziah was not the one who could stand prosperity. He was marvellously helped, till he was strong, but when he was strong his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God. Very minutely we are told how Uzziah prospered in warfare, in building cities, in fortifying his capital, and in gaining great wealth in cattle; then we learn of his presumptuous sin in entering the Holy of Holies and burning incense there, a duty that belonged only to the priests who had been consecrated for the service; and swiftly comes the judgment upon him in the leprosy that breaks out on his forehead. Henceforth he lives apart from others, a leper, and Jotham his son takes his place on the throne.

How Haman bore Prosperity. Haman, the captive Amalekite, in some way won the favor of king Ahasueras. He was an astute man, and he succeeded in gaining greater and greater power over the king until he made himself the power behind the throne. But he could not bear prosperity. His head was turned by success, his heart was so lifted up that he believed that every one should bow down and do reverence to him as did all the king's servants. But one day Mordecai, a Jew, refused thus humbly to salute him; in great wrath Haman planned the destruction of all the Jews in the kingdom. In this he overreached himself, and he was eventually hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. His story recalls Cowper's lines:

> Beware of too sublime a sense
> Of your own worth and consequence.

The man who deems himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around in all that's done
Must move and act for him alone,
Will learn, in school of tribulation,
The folly of his expectation.

The Dark Valley of Prosperity. The great test of individual character is not struggle, but attainment; not failure, but success; not adversity, but prosperity. When nature wants to put a man through the third degree, she places near him his laurel wreaths of victory: she megaphones to him the world's plaudits of success, she parades stacks of newspaper clippings and magazine articles with his portraits; she clinks his money-bags in his ears, and she tells him confidentially of the world-changing power of his influence. She smiles on him kindly and murmurs "Poor fellow, is he able to stand it?" Then she sends him for his test through the dark valley of prosperity.

Few pass through it immune; few acquire no perversion of mind, few escape fractures of ideals or new dents in character. But when one, through it all, remains just as good and simple and lovable as when he began the trip, remains kindly, sincere, strong, sympathetic, and unspoiled, Nature is glad indeed to admit that she has found a real man, a big man, a great man.

It is called the dark valley of prosperity because it so often dims the vision of the finer realities of life. In the early stages, in the dimness, they can not see their old friends as they pass. There comes a peculiarity of the extensor muscles which prevents their extending the hand to some one no longer necessary to them. They acquire a form of memory impairment which prevents their remembering past favors and debts of gratitude due to those who stood by them in their hours of need.

In the dark valley, their dearest hopes and their high ideals often slip away into the silence. For them are substituted avarice and ambition, dressed in a livery of gold, and one may near-sightedly mistake them for higher good.

Poverty, struggle, failure and adversity are not in themselves passports to saintship—though they have given moral strength and sweetness to thousands. They have their own hard, bitter temptations to meet face to face. Theirs is far from an easy fight—the daily hand-to-hand battle with fate. But their temptations are usually direct, bold, clearly defined, and their joys require so little. The tempting tests of prosperity come in subtle phases, gilded, perfumed, masked in deceptive guise.

If called upon to bear the burdens of the greater responsibility let us bear them bravely at our best and let nothing rob us of simplicity, sweetness, strength, sympathy and all that is sterling. The greatest men and women are ever the simplest. Condensed from *The Crown of Individuality,* by *Wm. George Jordan.*

The Test of Prosperity nobly born. From the humblest circumstances Abraham Lincoln was exalted to the highest position in the gift of the nation. Prosperity did not spoil him in the least, he bore it nobly. In a speech at New Haven the President said: I am not ashamed to confess that twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer, hauling rails, at work on a flat-boat—just what might happen to any poor man's son.

Gipsy Smith is one of the most successful evangelists of the day; crowds throng the halls wherever he speaks. On his study table in his home he keeps an old knife that his father used as a roving gipsy, and this knife, he claims, keeps down his pride. "When I return from a great campaign," he says, "I pick up the old knife, and I say to myself, 'If it were not for the grace of God, I would still be using this as a wandering gipsy."

II Pride goeth before Destruction

The Wages of Sin is Death. History has a nemesis for every sin, the historian Mommsen exclaims. Certainly the student of sacred history must agree with him. How repeatedly have we seen in our study of the books of the Kings and Chronicles that retribution follows sin. The leprosy which suddenly came upon Uzziah is classed among the miracles, but is it any more astonishing or awesome than the nemesis that befell the grafters in one of our

states two or three years ago? The country was appalled at the disclosure of corruption in connection with the building of a state capitol, when hundreds of thousands of dollars had been stolen by prominent men. A few were put on trial and were convicted. A year later the papers pointed out what retribution had overtaken many of them. The ex-state treasurer had died before he could be taken to the prison to which he had been sentenced. One contractor was very ill, another a nervous wreck, a third was dying of an incurable disease brought on by worry over his disgraces, and the builder had died after a lingering illness brought on by the same cause. The warrant clerk who knew what was going on had died suddenly under suspicion of suicide, and the traveling auditor had become insane.

Why Pride goeth before Destruction and a Haughty Spirit before a Fall. Pride opens man or nation to calamity. Pride makes a man think he is in need of nothing when his real poverty is abject. It makes him imagine he is safely standing just when he is tottering to a fall. It is not hard to explain why failure should be the fate of pride. For one thing, it keeps a man from learning, from benefiting by either advice or rebuke. Arrogant self-complacency seals the mind and cuts a man off from any chance of learning the lessons of life. "With the lowly is wisdom," says a proverb. For them there is at least an open door where wisdom can creep in.

A second reason for the failure is that pride provokes opposition and hatred. There is an innate desire for justice which makes men everywhere delight when the biter is bit, when the haughty spirit rides for a fall. Men in their heart of hearts hate the haughty man, even when they fawn the most. Pride always means strife; it excites the worst powers in men.

More, God hates it. It is foredoomed to failure. "A thing the Lord hates, yea, is an abomination to Him—haughty eyes." It is not only an offence to men; it is a sin to God. Retribution is not a penalty appended to pride, but a condition inherent in the very nature of the case. Only to the humble can God give Himself: only the child heart can see the kingdom. The beatitude is not a reward added to meekness in payment for having overcome pride. It belongs to meekness as part of itself.—Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, Blessed *are* the meek. Condensed from *Listening to God,* by *Hugh Black.*

Somewhat after Aesop. A chrysanthemum and a cabbage met by chance at the door of a house where they had been left by a florist and a grocer, respectively.

"What part of the mansion are you about to visit?" asked the cabbage.

"The parlor," replied the chrysanthemum. "And you?"

"Alas, fair cousin!" rejoined the cabbage. "I am on my way to the cellar!"

"Call me not cousin!" said the other, arrogantly. "We are not related at all. The cellar is a good enough place for such as you."

The humble cabbage said no more; but a few days later they met again, by accident, for one brief moment. The cabbage reposed in the center of a large platter. The chrysanthemum was in a coal-bucket.

"Whither are you going?" feebly said the chrysanthemum.

"To the dinner-table," answered the cabbage. "And you?"

"Alas!" responded the other, "I am on my way to the garbage box."

Concerning which incident it may be remarked that pride still goeth before a fall, even as it did of old. *The Youth's Companion.*

III Marvellously Helped

God made him to prosper. Uzziah's name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. Earlier in the chapter we are told that he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, and as long as he sought Jehovah God made him to prosper. Yet when he had become great and prosperous, he seems to have thought that he had created his own prosperity, to have forgotten that, as General Gordon was wont to say, Everything is from God, and of God.

What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Taking the world altogether, it never has more than about three month's provision of grain in its garner. The failure of a single harvest all over the world would depopulate the earth. It has never enough laid up at any one time to keep it from starving during

the ensuing four months. It would seem to be evident that God does not intend that men should become independent of Him. He feeds them from time to time as they may need. He does so by the continual recurring succession of seedtime and harvest.

God's provision for man has never ceased to be a fact. Harvests have failed here and there. Droughts have oppressed in this place and that. Famine has paid visits. But take it altogether, seedtime and harvest have never failed to such an extent that provisions accumulated in the world's storehouse have not been sufficient to tide it over.

The problem is, How to distribute God's bounty? The first condition to its solution is that men shall recognize that the good things of life are God's bounty. "Labor" is fond of saying: "We create wealth by our hands, therefore it is ours." "Capital" is fond of saying: "We create wealth by our brains, therefore it is ours." They are both wrong. Neither of them creates wealth. It is poured out from the bounteous hand of God. If it be objected that this is introducing the religious sentiment into a purely material problem, I reply, the problem has never been solved, never will be, except as this sentiment is satisfied. Said Mr. Lincoln: "Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right." The reason is, right is the most imperious force in God's universe, for it is God Himself. It will overturn and overturn and overturn until He comes whose right it is to reign. Only in proportion as men realize that they are all alike children seated at their Father's table will they begin each to serve another before himself. *S. D. McConnell,* in *God's Provision for Man.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Jesus Christ was the lowliest among the mighty and the mightiest among the lowly. *Jean Paul Richter.*

The soil for the harvest of pain is brought down from the peaks of pride by the torrents of desire. *George Macdonald.*

Many people need some Good Samaritan to drag them from the dark valley of prosperity and put them back again in the sunlight of struggle and the inspiration of adversity. *William George Jordan.*

He who is intoxicated with his own success is essentially a weak man. *Hillis.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

A thing the Lord hates, yea, is an abomination unto Him—haughty eyes. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Uzziah's sin. 2. Do the good prosper and are the wicked punished?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. In what year did Uzziah die? (740 B. C.) 2. Why was Uzziah's death a seeming calamity to Isaiah? (Clipping, p. 207.) 3. What was Jeroboam's vision of God? 4. What does the word "twain" mean? 5. What words of the lesson did Jesus quote and for what purpose? (Mt. 13.14-15.) 6. When did John use them with reference to his Lord's work? (Jn. 12.37-41.) 7. What in general is the chronological order of the prophetical books? (Clipping, p. 27.)

Questions to think about. Why did Isaiah exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am undone?" (Clipping, p. 209.) 2. What words of Peter, as he compared himself with his Lord, are recalled by Isaiah's word, v. 5? (Lk. 5.8.) 3. What is the meaning of v. 13? (Clipping, p. 206.) 4. Mention a few Bible characters especially commissioned for a great work. 5. Mention a few special messengers of modern times. 6. What home missionary work can your school do? 7. What can you do? 8. Compare Isaiah's vision with Paul's vision.

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of Uzziah's reign.

LESSON VII—MAY 14

ISAIAH'S VISION AND CALL TO SERVICE
(Home Missionary Lesson)

Golden Text

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. Isa. 6.8.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Isaiah 6.1-13. Isaiah's Vision and Call to Service. **T.** Isaiah 2.1-4. Isaiah's Vision of the Attractiveness of the LORD'S House. **W.** Isaiah 2.5-22. Vision of the Vanity of Idols. **T.** Isaiah 3.1-15. The LORD Entering into Judgment with the Rulers. **F.** Isaiah 3.16-26; 4.1. Judgment on Careless Women. **S.** Isaiah 4.2-6. The Redeemed Jerusalem. **S.** Isaiah 1.1-20. Come, let us Reason together, Saith the LORD. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Isaiah 6 COMMIT vv. 6-8

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. 8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. 9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn again, and be healed. 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste. 12 and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. 13 And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *In the year that king Uzziah died.* 740 B. C. This remark shows that, though the vision occurred in this year, the account was not written till sometime afterward.—*I saw.* "God gives him while awake a look into the invisible world, by opening within him the inner sense for the supersensible, while the external activity of the senses ceases" (*Delitzsch*).—*Train.* Or, *skirts,* RVm., of his robe.—*The Temple.* "What the prophet sees is the spiritual reality of which the temple was a symbol, Jehovah's presence as king in the midst of the people," (*Skinner*).

2. *Above him.* As the Targum explains, above for his service.—*The sera-*

phim. "Here only in the Old Testament the Hebrew word denotes supernatural beings. It is derived from the verb 'to burn,' and may simply indicate the fiery or glowing appearance of Jehovah's attendant angels, Ezek. 1.13-14" (*Dummelow*). "It is worthy of notice that the brazen serpent Num. 21.8, made by Moses must have been a conspicuous object in the temple at the time of Isaiah's call, 2 K. 18.4 (*Skinner*).—*With twain.* With two wings. "With two he covered his face that he might not see; and with two he covered his body that he might not be seen" (*Targum*).

3. *One cried unto another.* They kept crying, in antiphonal song.—*Holy.* "In its original derivation the Hebrew word *holy* means *separate, apart from, distinct,* but in Isaiah's vision it evidently had a double content: it emphasized both Jehovah's supreme majesty and His moral sanctity" (*Kent*).—*Holy... glory.*" "Holiness and glory are correlative expressions: Jehovah in Himself is 'holy,' and His manifestation of Himself is 'glory' " (*Delitzsch*).—*The whole earth is full of His glory.* Or, *the fulness of the whole earth is His glory,* RVm.

4. *The foundations shook.* "The building was seized, as it were, with devout awe" (*Delitzsch*).—*Filled with smoke.* "The smoke indicates the coming into view of the self-manifestation of God, *viz,* His anger against sin: compare Rev. 15.8 where the heavenly temple becomes full of smoke from the glory of God immediately after 'the seven angels' had received the golden vials full of the wrath of God,' " says Cheyne. "The smoke is represented as the effect of the songs of praise of the seraphim. The material for producing smoke on the altar of incense is thereby set on fire," is the interpretation of Delitzsch.

5. *Woe is me! for I am undone.* God's holiness and glory makes him conscious of his own weakness.—*I am a man of unclean lips.* Recall Peter's remark, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord, Lk. 5.8, as he compared himself with his Master. Isaiah hears the seraphim praising Jehovah and becomes at once conscious that his lips (his nature) were unfit to join in the song.—*A people of unclean lips.* Their tongue and their doings are against Jehovah, 3.8.—*For mine eyes have seen the king.* Another reason for exclaiming "Woe is me!" Who is able to stand before Jehovah, this holy God? 1 S. 6.20; Ex. 33.20.

6. *A live coal.* Or, *hot stone,* RVm. Fire is an agent of purification, and with it Isaiah's lips are purged, v. 7.—*From off the altar.* Where the fire is never extinguished, the heavenly altar being modeled like that of the temple.

7. *Thine iniquity is taken away.* The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin, 1 Jn. 1.7.—*Forgiven.* Or, *expiated,* RVm.

8. *Whom shall I send?* This is the purpose of the vision.—*Us.* Jehovah and the seraphim.

9. *Hear ye, but understand not, and see ye but perceive not.* "This people" were not capable of profiting from a clearer revelation.—*Indeed.* Or, *continually,* RVm.

10. *Make the heart of this people fat.* Compare Ps. 119.70: their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in thy law. The heart here includes the understanding, and a fat heart is a callous heart, a dull understanding.—*Make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.* The Scripture writers think of God as the first cause of all things: compare Prov. 16.4—Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. The result of Isaiah's preaching will be that the people will neither hear nor see the spiritual truths revealed, and this result is represented as God's object in sending him. Compare Jesus' words about His purpose in using parables, Mt. 13.13, and about the result of His coming, Jn. 3.19.—*Lest they see...be healed.* Recall Jesus' repetition of these words in Mt. 13.14-15.

11. *How long?* Surely Thou wilt not cast off Thy chosen people forever? Compare Moses' words in Ex. 32.11-13, and Ps. 79.5.—*Until...waste.* Until judgment has been meted out to the present people as a nation.

12. *And Jehovah have removed men far away.* A reference to the Assyrian policy of removing conquered nations from their home.

13. *And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up.* Or, *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten up,* RVm.

"The tenth" seems to be an allusion to the doctrine of "the remnant," Amos 5.3.—*Eaten up.* Or, *burnt,* RVm.—*A terebinth and an oak.* "These trees with which a multitude of associations from the early times of Israel were connected (Gen. 12.6) have, like the beech and the olive, the property of renewing themselves again from the root—stumps even when their trunk has been felled" (*Delitzsch*).—*Whose stock remaineth when they are felled.* Or, *whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves.* For as there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease (Job 13.7), so there is hope of Israel, that in the ruined nation the principle of vitality will not be consumed and from it a new Israel will spring. "This is the bright side of the judgment by which Isaiah constantly relieves the general gloom of his preaching. It presents an outline of the history of Israel to the end of time. Israel as a people is imperishable in virtue of divine promise; but the mass of the people is henceforth destined for destruction in virtue of a divine decision, and only a remnant which is converted will finally propagate Israel's prerogative as a people and inherit the glorious future (*Delitzsch*).

Branch of the Terebinth

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

2. *With twain he covered his face.* We talk about God's incomprehensibleness as if it were a sad necessity; as if, if we could understand God through and through, it would be happier and better for us. The intimation of Isaiah's vision is something different from that. It is the glory of his seraphim that they stand in the presence of a God so great that they can never comprehend Him. His brightness overwhelms them. They cover their faces with their wings, and their hearts are filled with reverence, which is the first of the conditions of complete human life which they represent. *Phillips Brooks,* in *The Light of the World.*

5. *Mine eyes have seen the King.* "No man hath seen God at any time," says the Apostle, and yet the prophet says that he saw Him—which speaks the truth? Is it possible to see the Infinite? We say God is infinite: that is, He is without limitations. In the nature of things that which has no limitations can be neither seen nor known. Others have spoken of seeing God. Moses on Mount Sinai saw His back as the glory swept by. Samuel and Elijah are declared to have heard His voice. The Savior says "The pure in heart shall see God," and Moses said that if a man were to see Him he would die. These seem to be contradictions, and yet they are not. One class of passages refers to the spiritual sense, and the other to the physical. No one ever saw God, and yet Moses and Isaiah saw Him, and Samuel and Elijah heard His voice. As mountains and oceans are seen, God has never been seen.

Isaiah had a vision—something like a dream—possibly really a dream—in which the Diety seemed present. It was so vivid that it marked an epoch in his life and teachings. The prophet with the eyes of his spirit saw God as never before. He was as sure of Him as of friends in the flesh; he could no longer doubt that all men and nations were in the Divine hands. In that supernal light all things were made new.

Isaiah saw God. Do men see Him to-day? Was He any nearer to Jerusalem than He is to London or New York? Did that old Hebrew possess faculties different from ours? Can we see and know God?

What do we mean by seeing and knowing God? A spirit cannot be seen with physical eyes. We mean that we are so convinced of the reality of God

that our thinking and living are determined by that conviction: so sure of Him that we live as if we saw Him by physical sight. Without trying to prove anything, observe that many of the wisest, purest, and least likely to be deceived of all time, have had this faith—a faith so firm that it has transformed and transfigured life, and been held in face of loss and death. Condensed from *Growing Revelation,* by *Amory H. Bradford.*

6. *In the year that King Uzziah died.*—About the time that this crisis came in the life of the young Jew, the city of Rome was founded. The obscure village grew to be a city, the city developed into a State, the Republic spread its power over the Italian Peninsula, then it launched out on a conquering career; it finally subdued the civilized world and came to be a great imperial power. That empire, after centuries of sway and influence crumbled to pieces and left its varied heritage to the life of mankind: new empires have risen and the world is called to face new problems. Isaiah's vision remains and the spiritual kingdom to which it belongs is beginning to be revealed in larger outline and richer fulness. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of God abideth forever." Distance of time does not destroy our interest in a scene which is a parable of the changeless life and part of the upward movement of God's kingdom. *W. G. Jordan,* in *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals.*

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Chronicler closes his account of Uzziah's reign with these words: Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write. So Uzziah slept with his fathers; and Jotham his son reigned in his stead. The Book of Isaiah begins with these words: The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah. Then follows an account of the corruption in Judah and prophecy of punishment. Chronologically, the Book should begin with our lesson, Chapter VI, Isaiah's Vision and Commission, which came to him "in the year that King Uzziah died;" and were his inauguration into his office of a prophet. See the account of the Book of Isaiah, p. 30.

Uzziah had been a master of statecraft and diplomacy; he was successful in the arts of both war and peace; he had walled cities and big armies and much wealth. Isaiah must have been a young man at his death, but he could see the corruption at home, which we shall consider next Sunday, and also the distant war-clouds big with dread that were threatening the life of the nation, for Judah lay in the path of the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III, who was beginning to conquer the western world. Could Uzziah's son, who lacked his father's ability and energy, rule wisely in such a crisis? Isaiah may well have been tortured with fear, till in the quiet temple his grand vision came to him and his fears took flight, for he learned that whoever the earthly ruler, Israel's real king was Jehovah.

"The conception of his vision is singularly pure and lofty," to quote the words of Dr. A. B. Davidson. "It is a worshipper's thoughts when he draws near to God. The vision is but the service in the temple transfigured. The prophet fell into a trance while beholding the service and musing on its meaning. Suddenly the house and service and the ministers became trnsfigured; the walls went apart, and the roof lifted itself up till it seemed the high dome of God's palace on high under which he stood, and the Lord the King sat upon His throne receiving the adoration of all holy beings."

Professor Kent, in "The Kings and Prophets of Israel," points out that "this marvelous sixth chapter reflects the entire gamut of Isaiah's experiences; his youthful struggles with the sense of personal responsibility; his strong, enlightened patriotism; his keen insight, and that transcendant vision of Jehovah's majesty and holiness which never faded from the prophet's memory. The chapter also suggests those long years of opposition and discouragement, the folly of king and people in rejecting his sane counsels, the disasters that overtook Judah at the hands of the Assyrian conquerors, and, above all, that deathless hope in the future of his race and in the goodness of Jehovah which never failed Isaiah in his half century of tireless activity."

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

To-day is "Mother's Day," the second Sunday in May, which is set apart by churches and Sunday-schools in all parts of the land as the special day of the year in which to honor "the best mother who ever lived—Your Own." Wear a white carnation, the emblem worn by many to-day, and bring one for each of your pupils. After you have described the wonderful vision of Isaiah so that the children see it, emphasize Isaiah's readiness to be God's messenger, to serve Him by preaching to His people. Tell the story of Evangeline Booth's readiness as a little girl to see God, p. 211, and talk about the ways in which children can serve Him. Then tell your pupils about "Mother's Day," and as you give them the carnations you have brought for them tell them that one of the ways they can serve God is to honor their mothers. Give them copies of the motto of the "Look up Legion," p. 212, and explain it to them. Ask them to learn it and repeat it to you next Sunday.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. "What do you think of God? Who is He?" a teacher in Bremen once asked a small child. "He must be a Spirit," was the answer that slowly came. "Here, show me what He seems like to you," the teacher said, holding out a piece of chalk. The little one went to the blackboard and taking the chalk broadwise drew a mighty mist, and then dotted it all over. What did that image mean to the child? Must it not have been the star-lit sky, the Milky Way? And did it not show that the little one had a grand thought of God and His greatness? What that child tried to show by his chalk picture the great prophet Isaiah showed by a word picture.

For Older Pupils. Dr. Peter Akers once denounced slavery and made a prediction—strange for that day—that the time would come when slavery would be overthrown. Among his hearers was a young man named Abraham Lincoln. As Lincoln walked home from church that morning he confided to a friend that during the sermon he had had a vivid vision of that coming time, and also a remarkable conviction that in some way he would in after years have an important share in bringing about this great consummation. Here was a vision and a prophecy. We study to-day a greater vision and prophecy of a greater prophet.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Vision of God

Isaiah's Vision. As far as the East is from the West, so far is the distance between the vision of God grasped by Jeroboam and the people of Northern Israel to whom the golden calves represented Jehovah, and the marvelous vision of Isaiah, to whom Jehovah is a Being so mysterious, majestic, sublime and awful that even the Seraphim veiled their faces in His presence.

Above the Lord stood the Seraphim. "They are not angels," Bishop Phillips Brooks tells us; "they are rather the expressions of the forces of the universe waiting there beside the throne of God; they are titanic beings in whom is embodied everything of strength and obedience which anywhere in any of the worlds of God is doing His will." These majestic beings stand in the presence of the Divine Being and reverently cover their faces with a pair of wings, for they are neither able nor worthy to look upon His resplendent brightness; and humbly they cover their feet with another pair of wings, for in that sacred presence they are overwhelmed with the sense of their unworthiness, and eagerly and willingly they use the third pair of wings to fly, for they were winged for service. "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory," they chant, and their "thunderous praise" shakes the temple and it is filled with smoke, the symbol of His presence.

Could words express a grander conception of Jehovah? Could that conception be told with more majestic simplicity?

The Vision Stayed. Isaiah beheld a sight that lived in his soul forever.

ISAIAH

From the painting by Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel

The vision stayed with him and made him a fearless and mighty prophet of God. It was the secret of all his courage and all his sacred eloquence.

Read the lives of the apostles and you will find that it was their God-consciousness, their faculty of seeing the Divine, of living as in the presence of the Infinite Majesty, that made them so irresistible.

They saw God; they realized God. In God they lived and moved and had their being. This was especially true of Paul, and hence the marvelous dymanic of his life.

Look into the Gospels, and see how even Jesus was sustained and borne up by His consciousness of God. The infinite Father was more real to Him than the Judean hills and rocks. Whether in the midst of the loneliness of the mountain-side or in the midst of the curious multitudes, He was always ready to have a word with His Father. Material boundaries and limitations were nothing to Him. He stepped across and refreshed His soul by communion with the Highest. *Robert Francis Coyle,* in *The Church and the Times.*

How to Get a Vision of God. Dr. Maclaren refers to an old story about St. Bernard riding along by a lake on the way to a council, and being so occupied with his thoughts and discussions that after a day's travel beside that lake he lifted up his eyes and suddenly questioned, "Where is the lake?" And then he makes the application: "So we, many of us, go along all our days on the banks of the great sea of divine love, and we are so busy thinking about other things, or doing other things, that at the end of the day's journey we do not know that we have been traveling by the side of the flashing waters all the day long."

Referring to the time when he was composing his Hallelujah Chorus (Messiah), Handel said: "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the Great God Himself."

The Lick Observatory is not built on the coast where fogs and mists at times obscure the heavens, but on the top of Mount Hamilton, where the air is clear. The vision of truth and duty does not come to the one who dwells always on the levels, where his sight is limited to self and self's interests with their obstructing mists, but it does come to the one who mounts to the heights where he can hold communion with God and receive His Messages.

II The Vision of Sin

Isaiah's Vision. There came on the prophet, as in a flash, the two convictions, one which he learned from the song of the seraphs, ringing in the music through the temple, and one which rose up, like an answering note from the voice of conscience within. They sang "Holy! holy! holy! Lord God almighty!" and what was the response to that in the prophet's heart? "I am unclean." Each major note has a corresponding minor, and the triumphant doxology of the seraph wakes in the hearer's conscience the lowly confession of personal unlikeness to the holiness of God. It was not joy that sprang in Isaiah's heart when he saw the thronéd King, and heard the proclamation of His name. It was not reverence merely that bowed his head in the dust, but it was the awakened consciousness, "Thou are holy; and now that I understand in some measure what Thy holiness means, I look on myself and I say, 'unclean! unclean!'"

Now I venture to think that one main difference between shallow religion and real is to be found here, that the dim, far-off vision, if we may venture to call it so, which serves the most of us for a sight of God leaves us quite complacent, and with very slight and superficial conceptions of our own evil, and that if once we saw, in so far as it is possible for humanity to-day to see, God as He is, and heard in the depths of our hearts that "Holy! holy! holy!" from the burning Seraphim, the easy-going, self-satisfied judgment of ourselves which too many of us cherish would be utterly impossible; and would disappear shrivelled up utterly in the light of God. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear," said Job, "but now mine eye seeth Thee; therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A hearsay God and a self-complacent beholder—a God really seen and a man down in the dust before Him! Has that vision ever blazed on you? And if it has, has not the light shown you the seaminess of much in which a dimmer light detects no flaws or stains?

Thank God if, having seen Him, you see yourselves. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *The Book of Isaiah.*

Peter's Vision. You recall the story of the remarkable draught of fishes. From Peter's boat near the shore Jesus had been teaching the multitude on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and then He turned to Peter and bade him let down his nets for a draught of fishes. "Master," Peter answered, "we have toiled all night and taken nothing: but at Thy word I will let down the nets." Then came the miracle, with its proof of his Master's divine power added to the proof of His earlier words. Peter was in the presence of the powerful and holy Jesus, and that revelation revealed to him also the depth of his own weak and sinful self, for he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

"How few of us can keep our balance," says George William Curtis, "when a regal soul dashes by!" There is no one who must not fall down on his knees and admit that he is a sinful man when he gains a full vision of the sinlessness of the Christ. That bright vision turned upon a human heart shows a blackness there. A revelation of what the ideal self might be must make one pass judgment upon the real self, even as the half of the moon that is flooded with light from the glowing sun might pass judgment upon the real blackness of that half of the moon which is turned away from the sun's rays.

Sin and Salvation. In the Purgatory of the Chinese there is a Mirror of Sin into which the departed sinner is forced to gaze and see how sinful is his heart, and then he is dismissed for punishment.

Not thus does God treat the sinner, who has looked into the mirror of divine holiness and gained the vision of his own sin. The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation, to use the words of Martin Luther. This is the teaching of Isaiah's vision. No sooner had Isaiah acknowledged his sin by crying, Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King—than one of the seraphim took a live coal from off the altar and touched those unclean lips and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. "I have sinned against the Lord," humbly acknowledged King David to Nathan, and Nathan at once returned, "And the Lord hath made to pass the iniquity of thy sin." To repent is to be forgiven.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren draws the lesson here for us: Let us remember that we have the fulness of all that was shadowed to the prophet in this vision, and that the reality of every one of these emblems is gathered together—if I may so say—with abundance and opulence in Jesus Christ Himself. Is He not the Seraph? Is He not Himself the burning coal? Is He not the altar from which it is taken? All that is needed to make the foulest clean is given in Christ's great work. The central work of Jesus is to deal with man's sin; and whatever else Christianity is, it is first and foremost God's way of redeeming the world, and making it possible for the unholy to dwell with His Holy Self.

III Home Missionary Topic The Vision of Service

The Vision and the Volunteer. There are Moslem zealots who have journeyed to Mecca and gazed upon the places which to them are sacred, and then, lest their eyes which have seen the holy city should profane that vision by looking thereafter upon unhallowed scenes, they have kneeled down before white-hot bricks and let their heat burn out all power of sight forever. "The last thing I saw on earth was the Holy City," they proudly proclaim; "since then I have not seen."

Such a Moslem pilgrim sees his Holy City and then deliberately blinds himself and makes himself useless. An Isaiah sees the Holy God and strengthened by that vision volunteers for service. "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" questioned the vision of the Lord: and Isaiah answered: "Here am I, send me." The view of God gave Isaiah a view of self: the confession of sin brought a consciousness of salvation: the reception from God led to service for God.

The Call comes to Every Christian. You know the story of the Scots

Guards, how at the time of a British War in West Africa they were drawn up in line at Windsor and asked by their colonel who among them would volunteer for the Ashantee expedition. He explained the call, and then requested those who would respond to step one pace forward. Then he turned away for a moment, and when he looked again he saw them all in an unbroken line, just as they had been before. "What," he exclaimed, "the Scots Guards and no volunteers?" "Sir," said another officer, "the whole line stepped forward."

So should it be with all Christians. The call that reached Isaiah comes to every one: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? and the answer that Isaiah made should be the answer of every one: Here am I; send me. A Christian must be a volunteer. Go work in My vineyard to-day. The vineyard is large. It includes the home, the school, the church, the Sunday-school, the young people's societies, the Home Missionary and the Foreign Missionary societies, the village, the city, the country, the whole world. Where have you been sent? In what department are you working?

A Youthful Vision of Service. All my fondest ambitions were bound up in doing something for the poor. What happy visions were mine as I arranged the doll's wardrobe or trundled my hoop—visions in which I saw myself surrounded by hungry people I was feeding with hot soup, ragged people I was dressing in warm jackets, very sad people I was comforting, and—for my mother's training about goodness making gladness had its effect at a very early age—very bad people I was helping to make good!

They were wonderful day-dreams, and the most wonderful feature about them was that they became dearer, and more real, as the years flew by, until they ceased to be day-dreams at all, and I awoke to find them all, one by one, come true. I have always found plenty of poverty, grief, want, and, alas! plenty of sin, among which to minister, and I have kept on serving the people for the love of doing it. The realization of my dreams has far exceeded their happiest imagination, for I have never found a joy which could come anywhere near that which springs up to brighten the pathway of one who seeks to bless and to save.

Do you want to know how to build castles in Spain which shall not tumble down? Then build them for others! *Evangeline Booth, Commander of the Salvation Army of America.*

The Call of the Homeland. The Homeland, which for us native-born means America, furnishes a missionary field of the greatest importance. The task imposed upon the Church is one of great magnitude. The United States comprises an area of three million square miles. The 97th meridian which crosses the country a trifle west of Omaha divides the country into two equal parts. But they are equal only in geographical dimensions. They are not equal in population, in resources, in religious influence, and in future possibilities. There are 85,000,000 of people in this country, 60,000,000 of whom live in the eastern portion and the remaining 25,000,000 in the western part. It is estimated that there are 68,000,000 of people outside our evangelical churches.

Has our Church a mission and a message to the solution of the problem as it confronts us to-day? Most assuredly. We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone will save this as well as any other country.

No greater work presents itself to the Church to-day than the Christianization of the millions of natives and foreigners in America. By all that is dear to our hearts, to our homes, our firesides, our children, and our children's children, our nation and our Church, we are called upon to do larger things for Christ and His Kingdom. From an Editorial in *The Heidelberg Teacher.*

The Call of the Cities. A worker in city missions asks these questions: Has the native American unchurched in a great metropolis less claim on us than the native American Indian of the Western plains?

Does the negro problem cry less loudly for solution in our crowded cities than in the sunny fields of the South?

Shall we leave foreign quarters of our own congested municipalities in darkness and superstition, while we send the Gospel light to lands across the seas?

Many young foreigners crowding into our cities soon lose all faith in the

religion of their fathers. Shall they drift into infidelity and agnosticisms, or shall they be taught the way of salvation through Jesus Christ?

The Call of our Distant Possessions. On Annette Island, southeastern Alaska, there is one of the most remarkable villages in the world. In it nobody gets drunk, everybody goes to church, no one smokes save an occasional tourist, no work of any kind is every done on the Sabbath, God's name is never taken in vain, and there has never been any bloodshed.

This model community—seemingly a bit of heaven on earth—is New Metlakahtla, a settlement of full-blooded Tsimshean Indians, founded by William Duncan, a simple, unassuming English layman who made his advent among them fifty-two years ago, Oct. 1, 1857.

With this interesting picture, Miss Belle M. Brain begins an article about William Duncan, in *The Missionary Review of the World.* Here is her picture of the old Metlakahtla as William Duncan found it: The cruelty and degradation of the Indians beggar description. Their natural fiendishness was augmented by the white man's rum, and they were a terror then along the coast, both to red man and white. Not long after his arrival Mr. Duncan witnessed a sight from one of the bastions of the fort that revealed the awful depths into which these people had fallen. A chief having murdered a slave woman in honor of his young daughter, two bands of hideously-painted savages dragged the body to the water's edge, tore it limb from limb and apparently devoured the flesh. Maddened by rum and wrought to a pitch of hysterical frenzy, they continued their fiendish orgies day and night for some time.

Father Duncan is still living and working in New Metlakahtla. When asked what had tamed the Tsimsheans and wrought their transformation his reply was: "The only power there is in the world to change the heart of man is revealed in the Bible. The Gospel has done its work. You can teach the Indian in a great many ways—teach him to be this and that and teach him to work, and then fail if you discard the Gospel."

SENTENCE SERMONS

Meditation is the eye wherewith we see God. *St. Ambrose.*

Patriotism is consciousness of one's country's sins. *George Adam Smith.*

Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God. *Mrs. Browning.*

The people who see great sights are the people who do great deeds. *Coyle.*

We see ourselves when we see God. *Alexander Maclaren.*

The beginning of knowledge is to know thyself a sinner. *St. Augustine.*

If we do not serve it is because we do not see. *R. F. Coyle.*

Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord. *Julia Ward Howe.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Form the habit of going off by yourself at a fixed hour every day to see what God has to say to you. This is the counsel of Edward Everett Hale. Remember to put into practise the motto of his "Look up Legion:"

Look up and not down,
Look forward and not backward,
Look out and not in,
And lend a hand.

If you have the upward look, the vision of God, you will answer the call to service, and lend a hand.

Not mine to mount to courts where seraphs sing,
Or glad archangels soar on outstretched wing!

again Dr. Hale says, and later adds:

Be mine some simpler service here below—
To weep with those who weep, their joys to share,
Their pain to solace, or their burdens bear;
To serve some child of Thine, and to serve Thee,
here am I! To such work send me!

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. Vision of Sanctity, 1-4.
II. Vision of Sin, 5.
III. Vision of Salvation, 6-7.
IV. Vision of Service, 8-13.

In the year that king Uzziah died the prophet Isaiah had a vision of the Lord sitting upon a lofty throne, with seraphim hovering over Him. Each seraph had six wings; two wings with which to reverently cover his face, two more with which to humbly cover his feet, and two others with which to eagerly fly in the service of the Lord. In a responsive hymn the seraphim worshipped the Lord, singing: "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." As they sang, the cross-beams of the portal shook where Isaiah stood enraptured by the spectacle, and the house was filled with smoke, the emblem of the divine presence. The view of holiness made the prophet conscious of his own unholiness. "Woe is me! for I am undone," he exclaimed, "because I am a man of unclean lips, living with a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King."

Then a seraph took a live coal from the altar and touched the prophet's mouth with it, saying, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven." From rapture to abasement, from abasement to knowledge of forgiveness, the seer passed. Then he heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" What his commission would be he knew not, yet he eagerly volunteered, saying, "Here am I, send me." "Go," said the voice, "to this people."

And in prophetic vision the seer beheld what would be the result of his preaching: the people would hear but understand not; see, but perceive not, their hearts would grow calloused, their ears and eyes would be closed, so that they could not turn and be healed. "Lord, how long?" Isaiah asked—surely they cannot remain forever in such a state. "Until judgment has been meted out to them, cities laid waste, and the people taken away captive," the Lord answered. "But," he added, "even as there is hope that a terebinth or an oak that has been felled will branch out again, so there is hope for renewed life from ruined Israel."

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The essentials of worship: reverence, humility, service.
2. Opportunities open to our school for home mission work.
3. The great defect of the church; the lack of vision.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the 80th Psalm. 2. When did Jesus, like Isaiah, lead His hearers to assent to their own condemnation before they realized that they were the guilty one He meant? (Mt. 21.41.) 3. Tell the parable Jesus gave of the Wicked Husbandmen, one of our lessons last year. (Mt. 21.33-46.) 4. When did Jesus call Himself the vine? (Jn. 15.5.) 5. How did He say that we can bear good fruit?

Questions to think about. 1. Who is "my beloved," v. 1? 2. What purpose did the tower serve? (Clipping, p. 216.) 3. What is meant by joining house to house and laying field to field? 4. Contrast Isaiah in this lesson and in the last. (Clipping, p. 217.) 5. Contrast this picture of the condition of affairs as given by Isaiah with that given in Chronicles, our lesson two weeks ago. Both refer to the same period. How can both be true? 6. Isaiah has told about the drunkards of Jerusalem; what can you say about the drunkards of our city? 7. What do doctors and insurance companies say about total abstinence? 8. How many of our states have "no license?" How many have "Local Option"? What is the state of affairs in your State? 9. What lesson has the parable for you?

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Prophets write an account of the Vision of Isaiah.

LESSON VIII—MAY 21

SONG OF THE VINEYARD
(Temperance Lesson)

Golden Text

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Isa. 5.22.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Isaiah 5.1-12. Song of the Vineyard. **T.** Isaiah 5.13-23. The Captivity of the Drunken. **W.** Isaiah 28.1-13. Woe to the Crown of Pride of the Drunkards. **T.** Amos 4.1-13. "Bring, and let us Drink." **F.** Amos 6.1-11. Woe to Those Who Drink Wine in Bowls. **S.** Prov. 23.1-21. The Drunkard shall Come to Poverty. **S.** Prov. 23.29-35. The Woes of the Drunkard. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Isa. 5.1-12 COMMIT v. 11

1 Let me sing for my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; 2 and he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? 5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6 and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry.

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! 9 In mine ears *saith* Jehovah of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. 10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield *but* an ephah. 11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them! 12 And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are *in* their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-7. Study Psalm 80, which seems to have been based on this allegory. "Isaiah begins his discourse like a player who has a crowd around him, and with alluring words addresses and rouses up himself and his hearers. But the winged rhythm, the musical euphony, and the graceful assonance of the invocation, are inimitable and cannot be reproduced in a translation" (*Delitzsch*).

1. *Me.* Isaiah.—*For.* Or, *of,* RVm.—*My beloved.* Jehovah.—*His vineyard.* The house of Israel, v. 7. See Isa. 27.1-6.—*A very fruitful hill.* Heb. *a horn, the son of oil,* RVm. The word *horn* for a *height* is retained in the Arabic

name *Kurn Hattin,* the Horns of Hattin. The very fruitful hill is the land of Canaan.

2. *Built a tower.* For the watchers. Compare Mt. 21.33.

3. *Inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah.* The men of the city and of the country.—*Judge betwixt me and my vineyard.* The prophet of God identifies himself with God: as Knabenbauer says, he speaks out of the thoughts of God.

4. Compare Mt. 21.40, when Jesus leads the Pharisees to pronounce judgment upon themselves. Isaiah's hearers are silent, for they are conscious of guilt.

5. *And now I will tell you.* Imagine a pause after the question of v. 4, followed by Isaiah's answer to his own question. Although Judah was his pleasant plant, v. 7, this would not prevent Jehovah from punishing the people for their sins.—*The hedge.* Of thorns.—*Eaten up.* Or, *burnt,* RVm.—*The wall.* Of stone.

6. *I will lay it waste.* Contrast the harsh tone here with the gentle tone of the first verse.—*I will also command the clouds.* As Delitzsch says, "The husk of the parable, which had already been broken through, now falls completely off;" he who commands the clouds must be Jehovah Himself.

7. The interpretation of the parable. *He looked for justice, but behold, oppression.* He looked that it should bring forth grapes and it brought forth wild grapes, v. 2.—*Oppression.* Or, *shedding of blood,* RVm.—*A cry.* Of the oppressed, Jas. 5.4.

8. *Woe.* Six woes follow, directed against the "wild grapes" that grew in the "vineyard."—*Join house to house.* By violently taking the houses of the poor, Job 20.19. See Micah 2.2.—*Lay field to field.* They covet fields and seize them, Mic. 2.2.—*And ye be made to dwell alone.* The land would be in possession of only a few. The law provided that there should be a proportional division of the land (Num. 35.54) and there were stringent laws against the alienation of hereditary family rights. See Lev. 35.8-17; Dt. 27.17. Every fifty years, the jubilee year, all lands that had been sold or given away reverted to the family of the original owners. But we know from Jer. 34.14 that the law which freed a Hebrew slave after seven years was not kept, and in like manner the law of the jubilee was neglected.—*Till there be no room.* For the poor tiller of a small field.

9. *In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts.* "In Hebrew *to say into the ears* does not mean to speak secretly and softly, but, as Gen. 23.10-16; Job 33.8 and other passages show, it means to speak in a manner that is distinct and intelligible, and excludes all misunderstanding. The prophet is able to distinguish distinctly the thoughts and words of his own ego from the inspeaking of Jehovah which rises aloud within him" (*Delitzsch*).

10. *For.* Many houses shall be without inhabitant, v. 9, because the land shall be barren, v. 10.—*Ten acres.* Literally, *ten yoke,* or ten times as much land as a pair of oxen can plough in a day.—*One bath.* The largest liquid measure, "about eight gallons."—*A homer.* The largest dry measure, "about ten or twelve bushels."—*An ephah.* A tenth of a homer.

11. *Rise up early.* Drinking early in the morning was especially disgraceful, Acts 2.15. —*Strong drink.* This woe against drink follows by the law of association of thought the mention of a vineyard, v. 10.

Ancient Assyrian Lute and Harp

12. *Harp, lute, tabret, pipe.* "The *harp* consisting of a sound-box at the base, with wooden side-arms and a crossbar connected by the strings with the box below. The *lute* was a guitar. The *tabret* was a small hand-drum; unlike the modern drum, the parchment was probably rigidly fixed, and thus incapable of being tightened or loosened so as to regulate the pitch. The *pipe* seems to have been the wind instrument in most common use. It may have been a simple flute, a mere tube with holes, played by blowing either into one end or into a hole in the side. It is possible that it

was a reed instrument with a double and vibrating tongue, or with a single tongue" (*Hastings Dictionary*).—*The work of Jehovah.* The judgment upon them that He has warned them He will carry out, v. 13.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *My well-beloved had a vineyard.* The vine played a great part in the life of Palestine, and it is quite natural that it should be used in literature as the symbol of peace and blessing, fruitfulness and joy. In the prophets the thought of God's ill-requited toil and care is represented by the disappointed husbandman who looks in vain for the fruit from the vine upon which he has bestowed painful labor. We meet this similitude first in Hosea in a very brief form, "Israel is a luxuriant vine," but the fruit is not of the right kind—it is a luxuriance of impure worship, not of noble deeds. The next time we meet this figure it is in the form of a finely-worked-out poetic parable, one of the noblest pieces that we possess from the pen of the great Isaiah. It is even supposed that in the early years of his ministry, the prophet appeared at one of the festivals to sing before one of the assembled crowds the story of Jehovah's love, patient ministry, the bitter disappointment; that is uncertain, but it is quite clear that the union of privilege and responsibility here finds richer and sweeter expression. Jehovah is reluctant to condemn and destroy that which He has created and cherished, but what can He do. *W. G. Jordan,* in *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals.*

8. *Woe unto them.* It is with remarkable persistence that in every civilization the two main passions of the human heart, love of wealth and love of pleasure, the instinct to gather and the instinct to squander, have sought these two forms denounced by Isaiah—appropriation of the soil, and indulgence in strong drink. *George Adam Smith,* in the *Book of Isaiah.*

> "Ill fares the land, to every ill a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay."

8. *Ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land.* One remembers Isaiah's words when, in traveling in the Highlands of Scotland, one comes across the "clearance" ruins of villages and of crofts from which the peasants have been driven, that their place may be taken by deer, for which the wealthy brewer is prepared to pay a larger rent. *R. Bruce Taylor,* in *Sunday-School Chronicle.*

11. *Woe unto them that rise up early that they may follow strong drink.* This is the sign of the drunkards captivity. In every vice there is a stage beyond which, humanly speaking, recovery is impossible. A time comes when the jaws of the trap snap together, and the victim is caught. In intemperance this point is reached imperceptibly, and the victim is ignorant long after others see his danger. His captivity is made known to all, and to himself, when he needs to rise up early to follow strong drink. *Expository Times.*

> But what more oft in nations grown corrupt
> And by their vices brought to servitude,
> Than to love bondage more than liberty,
> Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty? *Samson Agonistes.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

2. *Built a tower in the midst of it.* At the time of harvest all fruit must be watched. In vineyards it is common for small, rough towers of stone, or booths raised on posts, to be built to lift the watchmen to a sufficient height to keep the whole ground in view; in other cases simple booths are made on a high part of the ground. In these latter whole families will at times take up their abode to protect their family property. Night watchmen on towers will call to each other across the valleys to keep each other awake, to ask how the night is progressing, just as in the cities the street watchmen in the bazaars whistle the one to the other at stated times to keep a check on one another's attentiveness. *E. A. G. Masterman,* in *Biblical World.*

2. *He hewed out a wine-press.* The wine-press was always in the vineyard

itself, as the ripe grapes would not without loss bear carriage to any distance. So numerous are these wine presses, that in the course of one day's exploration on the southern slopes of Mount Carmel I discovered eleven of them. They are very simple in structure, but unless destroyed by man's hand will remain while the world stands. A flat or gently sloping rock is selected. At the upper end a trough is cut into the rock about three feet deep at the lower part and four and a-half by three and a-half feet in length and breadth. Out of the same rock, and parallel to this trough, is cut out below it a shallower vat, about a foot in thickness of the native rock being left between the two. This segment of rock is perforated by two or three holes bored close to the bottom of the upper vat, so that when the grapes were pressed in the upper the juice streamed into the lower vat from which it was drawn off through another hole. *E. C. Tristram,* in *Bible Lands.*

5. *The wall thereof.* In regions where trees and bushes are not abundant for making a hedge, as is the case in many parts of Syria and Palestine, uncemented stone-walls, or walls built of mud-bricks dried in the sun, are used as a substitute. In many parts also a wall is built of earth. *Van Lennep,* in *Bible Lands.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Having had a vision of the King, Jehovah of hosts, the prophet Isaiah goes forth to carry out his commission regardless of man. Be quiet, fear not, he said to king Ahaz whose heart "trembled as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind" at the rumor of the coalition of Israel and Syria against Judah. Jehovah of hosts, let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, Isaiah declared in the midst of the excitement that reigned in Jerusalem (Isa. 8.13).

God was behind Isaiah. God had bade him warn His people, and boldly he obeyed. Last week we saw the cause of the prophet's greatness: to-day we see his power as a preacher of righteousness. In his denouncements recorded in the third chapter we hear the fearless prophet say: Jehovah will enter into judgment with the elders of His people, and the princes thereof; it is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts. The Parable of the Vineyard is an amplification of this thought. It is the story of Judah as God's unfruitful vineyard, and a warning of His judgment upon her.

Nearly two centuries have passed since the division of the kingdom (930 B. C.-740 B. C., though the exact time of this lesson is doubtful). Meanwhile Judah has had comparative peace and her chief men have acquired wealth. Especially under Uzziah's long reign did the difference between the rich and the poor become great, for, as we learned two weeks ago, Uzziah built up Elath, a port on the Red Sea which gave access to the trade of the East, especially of India. Uzziah was followed by Jotham, who died in 735 B. C., and was followed by Ahaz.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

You will find it very profitable to study this parable as a model for your own story-telling. Notice how it arouses curiosity and interest at the very beginning; how it gives just enough details to make the story worth while in itself, but avoids all unnecessary details that would consume time and detract from the purpose in view; how it keeps the statement of the moral out of the story itself, and makes its hearers agree with all that is said—even to the condemnation of themselves who are the guilty ones.

Limit your lesson to the first eight verses. Explain that greediness (eighth verse) was the wild fruit which disappointed the owner of the vineyard. The first topic is for your pupils.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. If you have done wrong, which do you dread most, your parents' words of censure or their sad looks that show you have grieved

them? Did you ever hear your mother say: I am disappointed in you, I expected better things of you? Would you rather have her say that to you, or have her scold you? It is a bitter thing to be told that we have failed to do what others have expected us to do, that we have disappointed them. Did you ever stop to think that we may disappoint God, that we may not be living as He has a right to expect us to live? Isaiah told the people of Judah how they had disappointed God.

For Older Pupils. The prince of modern word-illustrators is Dr. W. L. Watkinson, of England. The other day he was discussing with a caller the crimes of the city that do not abound in country districts, the crimes which are caused by the overcrowding and wretched housing of a great city's poor. To explain the cause he said: "I have just heard of a plant in New Guinea which, if given plenty of space develops naturally, taking all its nutriment from the soil in the ordinary way; but if the district gets overcrowded with trees this particular plant develops parisitical tendencies. It climbs around the trees nearest to it, and, giving up its own root work, it feeds upon the life-sap of the trees to which it clings." What could better express his thought than this similitude?

Hosea, speaking in the name of Jehovah, says, "By the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes." One of the most exquisitely beautiful of all the prophets' similitudes is Isaiah's Parable of the Vineyard, spoken when he was discussing the crimes of the rich. (Practice reading aloud the entire lesson—23 verses—so that after your introduction you may read it through without comment, that your pupils may grasp the beauty of the parable and the oratory of the denunciations. Or ask one of your pupils, who will do it well, to come prepared to read it.)

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Disappointing God

How the People of Judah disappointed God. After all His care of that vineyard the Owner looked for large, sweet, luscious, cultivated grapes, but He found only little, sour, miserable, wild ones, fit only to be trodden upon and destroyed. The vines in the vineyard on which God had spared no pains were the people of Judah. God loved His people, but what could He do when He found, not the good fruit of justice and right living, but the wild fruit of oppression and wrong-living, not right between man and man, but the cry of misery because the one oppressed the other? In their greed for houses and lands they thought not of the rights and needs of others. The divine Husbandman had expected better things of these His favored people, and they had grievously disappointed Him.

He would not be a Disappointment. "Oh, grandpa," said Charlie, "what lots of apples there are going to be this year! See how white the trees are with blossoms."

"Yes," said grandpa, "if the trees keep their promise there will be plenty of apples. But if they are like some boys I know there may not be any."

"What do you mean by keeping their promise?" asked Charlie.

"Why," said grandpa, "blossoms are only a tree's promises, just as the promises little boys make sometimes are only blossoms. Sometimes the frost nips the blossoms, and they bear no fruit."

"I see," said Charlie, "that you think when I promise to be a better boy I am only in blossom. But I don't mean to let the frost nip my blossoms. I'm going to bear fruit." *Writer Unknown.*

How not to disappoint Christ. What does the spirit of selfishness claim? "I belong to myself, and what I want for myself I mean to get if I can. I do not intend to do things that I do not want to do any more than I can possibly help. I mean to have my share in what there is; and when I want to do a thing very much, I intend to do it, if I can." This is the way that human nature tends to live, boys and girls, men and women,—all tend to this way of selfishness. But Christ does not want to have you live in that way. He loves you so grandly, He cannot bear that you or any one should live that way. "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto

themselves." Christ does not want you to live in the spirit of selfishness; and in His dear love He has died for you, that you might not live any longer in the spirit of selfishness.

But how does He want you to live? What way of living does He think is worthy of you? Ah! hear the answer, boy and girl, youth and maiden. Not unto yourself, not unto yourself, but unto Him who died for you, and rose again. Yes! who rose again and is with you to help you to live the life He wants you to live. Living unto yourself means claiming yourself for yourself. Living unto Him means carrying about with you the grand thought that you belong to Christ; that your life is a great trust which God has committed unto you, and which you truly want to use in whatever way is best, according to God's definition of best. Living unto Him is caring with all your heart for the things that are great and good and broad and godlike,—caring for truth caring for broad usefulness, caring to influence and to save others, caring to keep very close in heart, mind and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you not say from the depths of an earnest heart such words as these:

Just as I am, young, strong, and free,
To be the best that I can be,
For truth, and righteousness and Thee:
Lord of my life, I come.

Condensed from *The Silver Cup,* by *Charles Cuthbert Hall.*

II Woe unto them that join House to House, that lay Field to Field

Selfish Capitalism. The leading men of Jerusalem had engaged in trade and had grown rich. Then they engaged in "land-grabbing," they formed large landed estates, driving off the small husbandmen just as Ahab had done with Naboth, only they oppressed and evicted them rather than killed them. The evil had grown so great that Isaiah, who was himself a member of the noble class, boldly denounced them. O, the pity of it! he exclaims, and predicts the time coming when many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Byron puts it thus:

There is the moral of all human tales;
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past;
First Freedom, and then Glory—when that fails,
Wealth, Vice, Corruption—Barbarism at last.

"We see this in more virulent forms in our great commercial centers, where the big men often become big by crushing out the little ones, and denude themselves of responsibility to the community in proportion as they clothe themselves with wealth. England and America need the warning as much as Isaiah's Judah did."

Woe unto them that lay Field to Field, till there be no Room. We cannot afford to lose the farmer who owns his medium-sized farm. No growth of wealth can make up for any loss in either the number or the character of the farming population. *Theodore Roosevelt.*

Give Battle. Shall I give battle to the greed that lays field to field till there be no place, to the truckling that calls evil good and good evil, to the self-complacency that makes the Pharisee wise in his own eyes, to the self-indulgence that is mighty to drink and to mingle strong drink for others, to the corruption which justifies the wicked for a reward?

Let Courage answer that question. How shall I arm myself for this battle? How array my forces to give hope of victory? Let Caution answer that question. If all the combativeness which Christians have employed in their conflict with one another had been employed in battle against the common foe, and all the caution which has been exercised in restraining Christians from hazarding a battle against the common foe had been exercised in planning the campaign against him, the kingdom of God would be much nearer its realization on earth than it is to-day. *Lyman Abbott,* in *The Blessedness of Battle.*

III Woe unto them that are Mighty to drink Wine

Isaiah's Warning. Isaiah well knew the situation in Jerusalem. His at-

tack is made against the aristocracy, the leaders who were living in luxury and revelry while their country, as the prophet knew, was in danger of attack and destruction from the Assyrian foe. What a picture he draws of these habitual drunkards! Our word *alcohol* comes from the Arabic, where it is two words, *El Gohul,* which mean "the great evil spirit." Surely it is well-named. It was the great evil spirit that took possesion of these men, they were not their own masters.

While Isaiah's warning was given to the leading classes of Judah, the sin of intemperance was not confined to them. Wealth has no monopoly of this evil, and his warning applies alike to rich and poor, old and young, then and now.

The Judeans did not drink like Beasts. The beadle of an Aberdeen church was sometimes overmastered by his thirst for liquor, and once when in an intoxicated state met Dr. Kidd, the minister, and challenged him to come and drink with him. "O, ay, Jeems, I'll come wi' ye an' I'll drink like a beast, to please ye." "Hooray!" exclaimed the beadle, "Come along!" They entered the inn and Jeems started to give the order, when Dr. Kidd filled a glass with cold water and drank it. "Hoots! Ye said ye would drink like a beast," the beadle called out. "Ay, Jeems, an' so I have," returned the doctor: "for ye know a beast is wiser than a man, an' drinks only what's gude for it—an' that's water."

Lack of Wisdom. "Once I visited an asylum for the feeble-minded, and it was a sad sight, I can tell you," said Aunt Hannah, reflectively. "Of course there were all grades, from a brain that was slightly clouded to utter imbecility, and I have always remembered one of the ways of testing the reasoning powers of the inmates. They were taken to a trough filled with water, into which a stream from a pipe was constantly running, and were given a dipper and were told to empty the trough. Those who could reason would soon see the uselessness of the task while the water was running in faster than they could dip it out, and would turn the faucet and stop the stream. Only the hopelessly dull kept on ladling. Sometimes when I look at our prisons, reformatories, and inebriate cures, and think how we are all the time dipping folks into them to be reformed while we let the saloons keep on running, I—well, I somehow can't help thinking about that test of idiocy they had at the asylum." *Forward.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Drink is the curse of the country. *Joseph Chamberlain.*

No man can live happily who regards himself alone, who turns everything to his own advantage. *Seneca.*

A Christian cannot consent to enrich himself by taking advantage of the downfall or misfortune of another man. *G. Campbell Morgan.*

The chief purpose of the time is to relieve economic conditions, of which the chief evil is the abuse of spirituous liquors. *The German Chancellor.*

Ye shall not wrong one another; but thou shalt fear thy God. Lev. 25.17.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. John 15.1, 2, 5.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

There isn't a day that we may not do something for the Master, if we will. Begin now. Ask God to help you bring forth some fruit to-day. *D. L. Moody.*

It has been said of one of our politicians that he is "one of the most private-spirited men in Congress." He must be like these men of Judah who looked out only for their own interests, regardless of the cry of the oppressed. Are you private-spirited in your business, your home, your school?

A veteran soldier said that his regiment was one of the first to reach Washington after the call for soldiers, and they were all allowed to see the town. He and a comrade were about to enter a saloon when he felt a hand laid upon his arm and looking up saw President Lincoln beside him. "I

don't like to see our uniform going into those places," Lincoln said, as he shook the lad's hand and passed on. All the wealth of Washington would not have led him to enter after that, he declared, and he had hated a saloon ever since. Soldiers who have enlisted under the banner of the Cross know that their great Chief does not like to see His armor-bearer enter such places, and they must hate them and fight them valiantly.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The parable, 1-6. II. The explanation, 7. III. The prophecy, 8-12.

Listen while I tell you about the vineyard of my friend. It lay upon a fertile hillside, too steep for a plough, so he dug the soil over with a hoe, and threw out all the stones; and then planted it with the choicest vines. He built a tower for the men who guarded it against thieves and hewed out a wine-press for the luscious grapes he naturally expected. How great was his disappointment when he found that it yielded only wild grapes!

And now tell me, men of Jerusalem and people of Judah, what more could have been done for my vineyard? And why did it produce wild grapes? I will tell you what I will do to that vineyard: I will break down the low stone wall and tear up the protecting hedge and leave the vineyard a prey to neglect, it shall neither be pruned nor hoed, briars and thorns will spring up, and not even rain shall come upon it.

That vineyard of my Friend, O my hearers, is the house of Israel, especially the kingdom of Judah, His favored people: and instead of the expected good fruit He finds only wild fruit, instead of justice, oppression; instead of righteousness the cry of the wronged.

Alas for those whose avarice leads them to absorb the lesser properties, joining house to house and field to field till there is no room left for the smaller owners! The Lord has told me that the ill-gotten land shall be smitten with barrenness, it shall yield only a tenth of what is sown, and the consequent famine shall take away the people of the cities.

Alas for those who from early morning till late at night drink strong drink! They have musical instruments, the work of men's hands, at their feasts, but they are spiritually blind, and cannot see the work of the Lord, the destruction that is threatening them.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The prophet Isaiah as a reformer and statesman. See page 29 of this book.
2. Should ministers to-day denounce the sins of their country?
3. The importance to the nation of the way land is owned.
4. The perversion of justice.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What does the Book of Micah tell us about the prophet Micah? (Micah 1.1.) 2. Where in the Book of Jeremiah is the prophet Micah referred to? (Jer. 26.18, 19.) 3. In what other book of the Bible are the first three verses of the lesson found? (Isa. 2.2-4.) 4. What is said in Isaiah 9.5-7 about the Prince of Peace? 5. What did Jesus say about peacemakers? (Mt. 5.9.) 6. What is the theme of the Book of Micah? (Clipping, p. 31.) 7. What are the characteristics of the Book? (Clipping, p. 32.) 8. What are the three first verses?

Questions to think about. 1. What is the meaning of "the latter days"? (Clipping, p. 223.) 2. What is the meaning of "the mountain of Jehovah's house"? (Clipping, p. 222.) 3. What is the meaning of the figure of speech in verse 4? (Clipping, p. 224.) 4. What are some of the evils of war? 5. How can disputes between nations be settled without war? 6. What can we do to promote peace?

Note-book and Memory Work. In your Book of the Prophet record Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard.

Commit to memory the two most beautiful verses in the Book of Micah: 5.2 and 6.8.

LESSON IX—MAY 28

MICAH'S PICTURE OF UNIVERSAL PEACE
(International Peace Lesson)

Golden Text

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Micah 4.3.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Micah 4.1-8. Micah's Picture of Universal Peace. **T.** Micah 1.1-16. Israel's Wounds are Incurable. **W.** Micah 2.1-13. The Lord their King, is Passed on before them. **T.** Micah 4.9-5.1. From Babylon shalt thou be Rescued. **F.** Micah 3.1-12. "Is not the Lord in the midst of us?" **S.** Micah 5.1-15. "Shall Feed his Flock in the Strength of the Lord." **S.** Micah 6.1-7.20. Who Pardoneth like unto God? *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Micah 4.1-8 COMMIT vv. 2, 3

1 But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. 2 And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; 3 and he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it. 5 For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god: and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith Jehovah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; 7 and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever. 8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-3. With a few slight variations, these verses are like Isa. 2.2-4. Whether both prophets quoted some older prophet, whether one quoted from the other, or whether, as Professor Cheyne thinks, the words were inserted by later editors of the works of these prophets, can not be known. In connection with these verses see Micah 5.2, 4, 5a.—*In the latter days.* The phrase as used by the prophets is equivalent to "Messianic times." See p. 223.—*The mountain of Jehovah's house.* Mount Moriah, the hill on which the temple was built. "Synecdoche for Jerusalem," *Cheyne.* "It is better to interpret the words figuratively as meaning that the fame of Jehovah will become so great that it will eclipse that of all other deities. The metaphor may be based upon an ancient belief that there was a mountain reaching from earth to heaven, on

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MICAH

whose summit the gods dwelt" (*Eiselen*).—*On the top.* Or, *at the head,* RVm.—*Peoples shall flow unto it.* Heathen nations shall turn to it, as the spiritual capital of the world.—*The law.* Or, *instruction,* RVm.

3. *Between many peoples.* Or, *among great peoples,* RVm.

4. *Sit under his vine and fig-tree.* See p. 224.

5. *For.* At the present time when Micah is speaking.—*We will walk in the name of Jehovah.* "To walk in His name means to live in mystic union with God as He has revealed Himself, and under His protection" (*Cheyne*).

6. *In that day.* The latter days, verse 1.

7. "Here and in 2.12 Micah expects the return from the Assyrian captivity, not of all Israel, but of the remnant who, remaining faithful to their religion, shall become the stock from which the Messianic future will spring. Compare Isa. 6.13; 10.20; 11.11; 24.13" (*Dummelow*).

8. *O tower of the flock.* Jerusalem.—*The former dominion shall come.* The greatest glory and power was under David and Solomon. Compare Amos 9.11.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *In the latter days.* It is the far-off horizon of time, which, like the spatial horizon, always seems a fixed and eternal line, but as constantly shifts with the shifting of our standpoint or elevation. Every prophet has his own vision of "the latter days"; seldom is that prospect the same. Determined by the circumstances of the seer, by the desires these prompt or only partially fulfill, it changes from age to age. The ideal is always shaped by the real, and in this vision of the eighth century there is no exception. *George Adam Smith,* in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

3. *He will judge between many peoples.*

Put off, put off your mail, O kings,
  And beat your brands to dust!
Your hands must learn a surer grasp,
  Your hearts a better trust.

Oh, bend aback the lancer's point,
  And break the helmet bar;
A noise is in the morning wind,
  And not the note of war. *John Ruskin.*

3. *They shall beat their swords into plowshares.* No energy is to be destroyed; it is all to be transfigured. The sword is to become a plowshare; the weapon of destruction an implement of culture. I saw a picture the other day which was intended to represent the re-enshrinement of peace. A cannon had dropped from its battered carriage and was lying in the meadow rusting away to ruin. A lamb was feeding at its very mouth, and round it on every side the flowers were growing. But really that is not a picture of the golden age. The cannon is not to rust; it is to be converted, its strength is to be transfigured. After the Franco-German war many of the cannon balls were remade into church bells. One of our manufacturers in Birmingham told me only a week or two ago that he was busy turning the empty cases of the shells used in the recent war into dinner-gongs! That is the suggestion we seek in the golden age; all destructive forces are to be changed into helpful ministries. Tongues that speak nothing but malice are to be turned into instruments of wisdom. All men's gifts and powers and all material forces are to be used in the employment of the Kingdom of God. *J. H. Jowett,* in *Homiletic Review.*

3. *And their spears into pruning-hooks.* From the ancient Chinese *She-king,* or "Book of Odes," the following couplet has been translated:

The hurtful ne'er without some good was born,—
The stones that mar the hill will grind the corn.

1-3. The hope expressed is not yet fulfilled; literally it will probably never be fulfilled; in spirit and essence it will reach its fulfilment, according to the

Ancient Coin Commemorating Peace

universal Christian belief, when the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Jesus comes to be the dynamic life and conduct everywhere. *Frederick Carl Eiselen, The Minor Prophets.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

3. *They shall beat their swords into plowshares.* In Joel 3.10 the expression is reversed: Beat your plowshares into swords. The plowshare was used for stirring up the soil, but it was only a small piece of iron somewhat resembling a sword, and could well have been changed into a sword or a sword could have been changed into a plowshare.

4. *They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree.* This is a figurative expression meaning a time of peace and prosperity, when every one can enjoy the security and comfort of his own home. The vine is here the trained vine running over a trellis or tree. It grows very rapidly, and its large leaves are seen waving from the topmost branches of a tree in "a perfect riot of life and endless energy." A fig-tree is often planted near the house. It is wide-spreading, and its innumerable small branches with very large leaves, larger than those of any other tree in Western Asia, afford a thick shade. It is a favorite family resort. Often the members of the family sit on mats beneath its shade and have their meals, or lie down there for a noonday nap.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To fully understand this lesson, a knowledge of the Book of Micah as a whole is necessary. See pp. 31-32 of the Guide.

Chapter iii closes with the prophecy of judgment; Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps. Chapter iv begins with a splendid vision of distant glories. The verses that immediately follow our chosen lesson, 4.9-5.6, explain how the change from distress to delight is to be made—through the coming Deliverer. It is often questioned whether, after predicting the overthrow of Jerusalem, it was possible for Micah to add prophecies of her restoration. Dr. George Adam Smith well remarks: "That promises come in his book and closely after the conclusive threats which he gave of the fall of Jerusalem, does not imply that originally he uttered them all in such close proximity. But considering how often the political prospect in Israel changed during Micah's time, and how far the city was in his day from her actual destruction—more than a century distant—it seems to be improbable that he should not have uttered both threat and promise. And naturally, when his prophecies were arranged in permanent order, the promises would be placed after the threats.

The exact date of the prophecy of our lesson can not be stated.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Begin with questions and a talk about next Tuesday, Memorial Day, as suggested in the approach to the lesson for Younger Pupils, but make your talk more simple. Do not speak about the horror of war, only about the way we honor the heroes of our wars. Then describe Micah's vision of the time when no one shall die in war because every one shall walk in the ways of the Lord, shall live as God would have him live, and there will be no war anywhere. Let this thought be the only part of the text which you take up with your class. Talk about Christ, the Prince of Peace, and describe the statue between Chile and Argentina, p. 225. Or, instead of the talk about peace, you can take up the other part of your lesson, the vision of the time when all shall walk in the way of the Lord, Second Topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. When is Memorial Day? Why do we celebrate it? By what other name is it known? How is the day observed?

"When the May has culled her flowers for the summer waiting long,
And the breath of early roses woos the hedges into song,
Comes the throb of martial music and the banners in the street,
And the marching of the millions bearing garlands fair and sweet—
'Tis the Sabbath of the Nation, 'tis the floral feast of May!
In remembrance of our heroes
We keep Memorial Day."

How our heroes came back from the war has been eloquently told by T. Dewitt Talmage. "I never realized what this country was and is, as on the day when, at the close of the war, our armies came back and marched in review before the President's stand at Washington. I do not care whether a man was a Republican or a Democrat, a Northern man or a Southern man, if he had any emotion of nature he could not look upon it without weeping ..... Tides of men came surging down, billow after billow, passing in silence, yet I heard in every step the thunder of conflicts through which they had waded, and seemed to see dripping from their smoke-blackened flags the blood of our country's martyrs ..... We gazed and wept and wondered. But hush—uncover every head! Here they pass, the remnant of *ten* men of a full regiment. Widowhood and orphanage look on, and wring their hands."

On Tuesday we will honor our heroes, brave and true, but to-day it is fitting that we think about Micah's prophecy of the time when universal peace shall reign.

For Older Pupils.

Then I dipt into the future far as human eye could see;
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be,

sings the poet Tennyson in "Locksley Hall." In the latter days it shall come to pass, sings the prophet Micah in the Book of Micah. And what is the vision that each one sees? The poet saw the heavens filled with commerce, and

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations airy navies grappling in the central blue;
Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

The prophet, too, sees the vision of universal peace and brotherhood.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Universal Peace

In Token of Thy Son. In his look far into the future Micah saw the time when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. It was a marvelous vision for that day and age. It is a marvelous vision still, though great progress has been made toward its realization.

"Peace on earth amongst men of good will," was the message of the angels when Jesus Christ was born. "O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord," are the words with which the "Collect for Peace" begins which is repeated daily at Morning Prayer in churches of the Anglican communion. Let lovers of Christ in all lands offer the prayer that Frank Dempster Sherman has beautifully expressed in his "Thanksgiving Hymn":

Lord of the nations of the world,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done!
In peace be all earth's banners furled,
In token of Thy Son:
To Thee we pray. O draw Thou near!
Hear us, Almighty Father, hear!

The Horrors of War. Read Longfellow's poem, The Arsenal at Springfield, with its reminder that Christ's legacy to the world was "Peace"!

A Lesson to the World. Chile and Argentina were on the verge of war over an old boundary dispute. While war preparations were made by both

countries, Catholic bishops and representatives of the English government pleaded for peace. It was suggested that a statute to Christ be erected between the countries as a rebuke to the clamor for war. Finally both nations agreed to let the King of England settle the matter. His decision gave each a part of the disputed territory; this was satisfactory and both signed a treaty agreeing to reduce their armies and navies and to submit, for a term of years, all questions of dispute to arbitration. The women of the two nations carried out the peace monument. From old cannon a statue of Christ was modeled, one hand holding a cross and the other extended in blessing. In March, 1904, it was placed on the very summit of the Andes. It rests on a globe, on which the map of the world is outlined; the globe rests on a granite column. One tablet below gives the history of the monument, and another says: "Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than shall the people of Argentina and Chile break the peace to which they have pledged themselves at the feet of Christ the Redeemer."

The *Youth's Companion* tells the result. "The new battleships were sold, and the proceeds turned to peaceful uses. Regiments have been mustered out, and the men have returned to their productive vocations. The arsenal of Chile has been converted into a school. The roads and harbors of both nations have been improved with the money saved from war. The great transandean railway is tunneling through the mountains and bringing the nations nearer together in time and commercial interests. Taxes are reduced. The people prosper. Best of all, the Spirit of the Christ has shown the world a better way than war."

Enders of War. From a papyrus about an Egyptian mummy two or three centuries before Christ, we learn that an Alexandrian named Dorion made a fighting machine so deadly that it was called the "Ender of War." From that time till now new inventions have been heralded as destined to put an end to warfare. Many now are ready to affirm that aerial navies will prove "enders of war." Says Henry Maxim: "The more highly scientific war engineering becomes the more the game of war will be one that can be played only by the most scientific and enlightened nations. Less and less will war be the arbiter of nations, for the difficulties and the expense will become so prohibitive that wars will no longer pay. The aerial navy will be a great bulwark of peace and a very great step toward the permanence of peace."

However this may be, the truth remains that the only sure ender of war is the spread of the knowledge of the ways of the Lord, as Micah tells us, and of the universal acceptance of His rule in the hearts of men. When the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God are universally accepted, war will cease. The human race will not easily be frightened out of the business of warfare, it has well been said; it must be raised above it. When all men's good shall be each man's rule, then, as Tennyson tells us, universal peace shall

> Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
> And like a lane of beams across the sea,
> Through all the circle of the golden year.

Measures that make for Peace. Beyond urging the settlements of disputes by arbitration and a limitation of armaments, let peace advocates address themselves to the task of softening racial antipathies and bringing about a better understanding between the nations; devise ways and means for checking the aggressive spirit of modern commercial imperialism; secure a limitation or abolition of the right of conquest—a right at present clearly recognized by international law; try to persuade the nations to refrain from violating each others' territorial entity and sovereignty and to be content with the exploitation and development of their own resources; and substitute, if possible, other nobler and less vulgar ideals for the ideal in statesmanship of mere commercial success and material prosperity.

But the most promising field for our activities as peace advocates lies in the international organization of the world on a federal basis, thus eventually insuring the permanent reign of peace and the establishment of universal order. It is the way of federation or voluntary union—the path followed with such beneficent results by the United States, Holland, Switzerland, Canada and Australia. The federation of the world is often regarded as a mere vision of

the poets and a dream of philosophers. But it may be observed that in the Hague Tribunal or Court of Arbitration, we actually have, albeit in rudimentary form, a World Judiciary; in the system of periodical Hague conferences we have at least the rude beginnings of a World Legislature; and in the Administrative Council and International Bureau at the Hague we may in time discover the germ of a World Executive. *Amos S. Hershey,* in the *Independent.*

II We will walk in His Paths

Walk in the Way. Our course of lessons has made us very familiar with this expression. Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, for he walked in all the way of Jeroboam and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for Ahab to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he took to wife Jezebel and went and served Baal. And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments. And in this way we might go through the records and make a list of those who walked in the ways of the Lord and another of those who did not. In his vision of "the golden age," Micah sees the time when all nations shall say, Come, let us go to the house of the Lord and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.

Walking Day. The largest Sunday-school in the world is in Stockport, England. With only two exceptions the school has celebrated its "Walking Day" every year since 1812—for a whole century. Great crowds of people line the streets to see the mighty throng, headed by the chief city officials and leading men and women, including more than five hundred teachers and thousands of pupils, some of them over eighty years old, some of them very, very small. It is a beautiful thought that that marching throng, and all Sunday-schools throughout all lands, are regularly in the house of God to be taught by Him His ways and to learn how to walk in His paths.

How to walk with God. What is necessary in order that two people can walk happily together? A little girl was asked this question and she replied: "Why they must be going the same way, of course; and they must like to be together, must be friends, and—and—they ought to like the same things,—and trust each other." Can you add anything more?

Where the Walk with God leads. "Tell me what you learned at Sunday-school," mother said. "Don't you know?" the child returned. "We have been hearing about a man who used to go for walks with God. His name was Enoch. He used to go for walks with God. And, mother, one day they went for a very long walk, and they walked on and on, until God said to Enoch, 'You are a long way from home; you had better come and stay.' And he went."

III Missionary Topic—The Old Testament as a Missionary Book

Micah's Conception of Judah's Mission. Isaiah preached the security of Jerusalem. God will intervene to deliver His people from Assyria. Micah found men misunderstanding this promise, and believing that God would not destroy city and temple, no matter what they did. He told them the only reason why the city was to be preserved was that it might become the centre of a better morality and a purer faith. Samaria and Jerusalem, the centers of the nation, ought to be the centres of justice and true religion. Instead they were centres of irreligion (1.5; 2.1-11; 3.1-10). Therefore Samaria has fallen (1.6) and Jerusalem shall fall (3.12).

But this does not mean that Judah shall pass away. Judah's mission does not depend, like that of Assyria, on money and arms. There was a time when Jerusalem was a mere hill fort, when the "glory of Israel" could house in the cave of Adullam (1.15), when Bethlehem, an open village, was a king's birthplace. This "former kingdom" could not compete with other nations in chariots, fortresses, and a wealthy capital, but it was rich in a great ideal, the ideal of a King who shepherded His people, and received their willing obedience. Though this time should come back, and the pomp of the capital

disappear, the result will be to show the nation their true mission of teaching religion to the world (4.6-10; 5.10-15). God is not casting away His people, though He destroy Jerusalem. There shall arise One from the old stock to represent the divine ideal. Then Israel will have a mission to the world. So long as she tries to compete with it in chariots (5.10-15), she is doomed to failure, and has nothing which Assyria cannot give better. But, when she stands for true religion, she offers what the world needs, and becomes the source of Messiah and the world's light (4.1-5). *One Volume Commentary.*

The Growth of the Great Missionary Idea. When our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations," He gave new emphasis and richer meaning to a truth which had been partially revealed, and He brought into the world of reality the highest aspiration of the older religion. The Old Testament is the seed-plot of great religious ideas, of ideals which show their lofty origin by their power to grow, and their affinity with the highest, holiest life of man. A little careful examination will show that what we call "the missionary idea" has its roots in the sacred literature which reflects the highest life of the Hebrew people.

In its earliest days the Hebrew religion was inspired by a lofty thought of God; Moses, the great leader, could not have done his work without the consciousness that God had called him to a noble mission, and his people to a great destiny. But after his day both the people and the religion had a long fight for existence. There was continual conflict without and within; the higher religious movement had always a fierce struggle against popular superstitions. In those days the highest life was clothed in simpler forms. David, who cherished a noble faith in the God of his fathers, felt that to be cut off for a time from the Israelite community was to be driven from the presence of Jehovah his God (1 Sam. 26.19). And down to the end there remained something of local limitation even in the faith of men who had attained to lofty thoughts of God and large conceptions of religion. But in the broad morality of Amos, the spiritual intuition of Hosea, the noble theology of Isaiah, the impartial zeal of Micah, there is the promise of all that was presented in varied forms by later prophets and teachers.

The most frequent statement is that foreign nations and distant people shall come to Jerusalem to seek truth and worship God: of this side of the idea Micah 4.1-4 may serve as a noble type. In this lofty ideal it is not suggested that the true religion will leave its home in Jerusalem and go out to seek and save that which is lost; it is an ideal Jerusalem, possessing an attractive religion, that is pictured but linked to the local habitation that was so dear to every pious, patriotic Jew. In Isa. 42.1-4 the missionary hope reaches its highest expression in the picture of a servant of Jehovah, who, with gentle persistence and unostentatious zeal, shall carry to the nations the precious gifts of revelation which have been coming to clearness and power through all the toil and travail of the past.

Thus we see that the "missionary idea" which is now an accepted part of the evangelical program rests not alone upon the law of common obligation, nor even altogether upon the gracious word of Jesus. It has a great history; it has been woven like a golden thread into the very fibre of the world's highest thought and noblest life; God, who took care of it in darker days, and who in the fulness of time gave it the richest manifestation in the life of His Son, will guide it to victory, and even out of imperfect effort will bring a fuller embodiment of His own Kingdom, so that the true Servant shall "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." Condensed from *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals*, by *W. G. Jordan.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Force is at best
A fearful thing, e'en in a righteous cause. *Schiller.*

Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war. *Milton.*

Two-thirds of all our revenues, outside of postal receipts, are used in war expenditure, past or future. *The World.*

Let us strive to achieve and cherish among ourselves and with all nations a just and lasting peace. *Lincoln.*

I feel convinced that, as civilization advances, the influences of Christian

teaching on the minds of men will tend increasingly to inculcate a love of peace. *Edward the Peacemaker.*

His name shall be called...Prince of Peace. Isa. 9.6.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

The same metal may be wrought into a sword or into a plowshare: it depends upon the idea of the artificer. The same stone may be fashioned into a temple of the Spirit, or into a fortress of cruelty: it depends upon the idea of the builder. So the same life may be squandered upon what is not worth while, or expended upon that which is excellent: it depends upon the idea of the man. *C. Hanford Henderson.*

At a recent peace conference it was suggested that a statute to the "Christ of the Andes" might well be placed on the boundary lines between all the nations. It is a picturesque idea, said one, but peace can be better secured by engraving the image of Christ in the heart of mankind. Let this be your work, for yourself and for others.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

The prophet Micah looks far into the future and foresees Israel's mission to the world. The time will come when other nations will acknowledge the supremacy of the temple, as the seat of God's universal dominion, and will say, "Come, let us go to the house of the God of Jacob to learn His will that we may obey it." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and from Jerusalem the word of the Lord. The result of God's universal supremacy will be that He will be the Judge in the quarrels of great nations; they shall turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, for in that glorious future nation shall not wage war against nation; they shall forget the art of warfare, and in security and prosperity the people shall dwell each in his own home, afraid of no one. This the Lord has declared.

At the present time, however, each nation is following its own god; therefore Micah bids the people of Israel to hold zealously their faith in the true God, since they hold that faith in trust for all nations.

The time will come, the Lord has declared it, when the lame and the exiled and the afflicted shall become the nucleus of a new kingdom, and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion for ever. The dominion of Jerusalem shall be restored to its former greatness.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Peace arguments for and against large armaments. 2. International arbitration. 3. What has been done in the past year that tends to advance the cause of peace among the nations of the world?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. In two of our lessons last year, Jesus quoted from Hosea: what were His words? (Mt. 9.13; 12.7.) 2. What does Isa. 51.16, 17 say about the sacrifice that is pleasing to God? 3. What does Hosea say in 5.13 about Israel's trust in Assyria? 4. Isa. 31.1 explains what is meant by "riding upon horses"; give the explanation. 5. Name the Major Prophets. 6. The Minor. 7. Why are they called Minor? (Clipping, p. 27.) 8. What is known about the prophet Hosea, and what was the purpose of his writing?

Questions to think about. 1. What are the words that Hosea would have Israel take with them, v. 2? 2. What is the meaning of the last part of v. 2? 3. What is "the work of our hands," v. 3? 4. Explain the meanings of the figures of speech in the lesson. (Clipping, pp. 230-1.) 5. For what does Ephraim stand? 6. Who are the speakers in v. 8, and what does each say? 7. Did Irael respond to Hosea's appeal? Clipping, p. 235.) 8. Is it possible neither to "backslide" nor to go forward in one's spiritual life?

Note-book and Memory Work. Commit to memory Hosea, 6.6. In your Book of the Prophets, write Micah's Picture of Universal Peace.

LESSON X—JUNE 4

ISRAEL'S PENITENCE AND GOD'S PARDON

Golden Text

Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger. Neh. 9.17.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Hos. 14.1-9. Israel's Penitence and God's Pardon. **T.** Hos. 6.1-11. Come, and the Lord will Hear us. **W.** Hos. 7.1-16. "Ephraim is a Cake not Turned." **T.** Hos. 10.1-15. "It is Time to Seek the Lord." **F.** Hos. 11.1-12. "When Israel was a Child then I Loved Him." **S.** Hos. 12.1-14. "Ephraim Feedeth upon Wind." **S.** Hos. 13.1-16. Israel's Destruction is that they are against me. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Hosea 14 COMMIT vv. 4-6

1 O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2 Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render *as* bullocks *the offering of* our lips. 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. 8 Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

9 Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *O Israel, return unto Jehovah.* Israel had turned to the heathen Baals. "Out of the Old Testament idea of a return to Jehovah grew the New Testament idea of conversion" (*Eiselen*).

2. *Take with you words.* Go prepared to express in words your repentance. Hosea then gives the fitting words.—*Accept that which is good.* Or, *receive us graciously,* RVm. "Accept what is good in us, in contrast to the iniquity which God is asked to take away" (*Dummelow*). See Micah 7.18, 19.—*So will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.* Hosea 6.6 explains this: For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. See also Ps. 51.16, 17. The offering of our lips is the words of penitence.

3. *Assyria shall not save us.* See 5.13; 7.11; 8.9; 12.1.—*We will not ride upon horses.* "The cavalry which the Egyptian Pharaoh sends in return for Israel's homage" (*George Adam Smith*).—*The work of our hands.* Idols.

4-8. "Like a beautiful melody comes the divine answer" (*Talbot*).—*I will heal their backsliding.* See Hosea 6.1; Is. 57.18.

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* See p. 232. God is the cause of spiritual growth. *The dew* is often used metaphorically for spiritual blessing.—*He shall blossom as the lily.* A growing soul is beautiful.—*And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* A growing soul becomes strong. The great roots of the grand

cedars of Lebanon strike deep into the earth, and the trees are strong enough to endure the storms of centuries.

6. *His branches shall spread.* A growing soul is an expansive one.—*His beauty shall be as the olive-tree.* Olive trees are beautiful, and the tree has the beauty of usefulness.—*His smell as Lebanon.* A growing soul has a refreshing savor. The cedars of Lebanon are fragrant.

Triumphal Procession of Egyptian King

7. *They that dwell under his shadow.* Israel as a nation is pictured as a tree under whose shade the individual Israelites dwell.—*Shall return.* To God. Those who are influenced by the truly growing soul will turn to God.—*The scent thereof.* Or, *his memorial,* RVm.—*Thereof.* Of the vine: Israel.

Triumphal Procession of Assyrian King

8. *Ephraim.* Representative of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom.—*What have I to do any more with idols?* Ephraim speaks, and the question is equivalent to a negative statement, I have nothing to do with idols. The margin of the RV gives another translation; O Ephraim, what have I to do any more with idols? and in this case Jehovah, not Israel, is the speaker.—*I have answered and will regard him.* Jehovah responds: I have heard his prayer and will regard him with favor.—*I am like a green fir-tree.* Ephraim rejoices in the quickened life (v. 7), and under this similitude affirms his strength and prosperity. But the speaker may be Jehovah. "The practice of worshipping under every green tree is frequently mentioned (Dt. 12.2; Jer. 17.2), and Hosea may very naturally point to this here. The prophet would have men draw near to Jehovah to worship even as in their idolatrous days they had performed their rites under the green trees. They that dwell under such a shade shall grow and flourish" (*Blake*).—*From me is thy fruit found.* Jehovah reminds Ephraim of the source of his prosperity. Compare Jer. 15.4.

9. The epilogue to the Book of Hosea, which may have been added by a later writer "to point the moral of the whole Book." Compare Mt. 11.15 and Eccles. 12.13.—*Who is wise...prudent?* Herein lies the difference between wisdom and folly—the wise understand these things, the warnings and exhortations of Hosea.—*For.* Here follows the reason why it is true wisdom to understand them. See Ps. 19.9-11.—*The just.* The one who obeys the will of the Lord, Isa. 26.7.—*Shall walk.* Without falling.—*Transgressors shall fall therein.* See Isa. 1.28.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

3. *Assyria shall not save us.* The world is now very much what it was in Hosea's time. These things are our example. Publicly, what is it that we trust in as a nation or a church? Is it the stability of our commerce, the reserves of our wealth, the business power of our law-makers; or, is it the blessing of God, of our Father, given as He gives it to a community which believes in the

honesty of the details of its trade, and lays its secular foundations in mutual fairness and good-will and has its spiritual strength in the faith and disciplined obedience of childlike hearts? Or, privately and individually, where do we set our hearts, on what do we place them, to what do we really look for the difference between a happy life and an unhappy one? Is it comfort, ease, money, pleasure, success? Are these things to us our Asshur, or our Egypt, our houses or our idols; or is it truth in the inward parts—a conscience quick to see, a will submissive to obey His will, who desireth nothing but our good? *E. S. Talbot,* in *A Nation's Trust.*

5. *He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* The controlling feature of Galilee is her relation to the great Lebanon mountains. Galilee is literally the casting forth of the roots of Lebanon. As the supports of a great oak run up above ground, so the gradual hills of Galilee rise from Esdraelon and Jordan and the Phœnician coast, upon that tremendous northern mountain. It is not Lebanon, however, but the opposite range of Hermon, which dominates the view. Among his own roots Lebanon is out of sight; whereas that long, glistening ridge, that stands aloof, always brings the eye back to itself. To her dependence on the Lebanons Galilee owes her water and her immense superiority in fruitfulness to both Judea and Samaria. *George Adam Smith,* in *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.*

6. *His beauty shall be as the olive-tree.* The harvest of the olive comes only to a long patience. The young plant is carefully cultivated for seven or eight years before engrafting, and even then for three years more before it bears fruit, but it is only after fifteen or twenty years that it reaches its full value. Watering is necessary in the earlier stages, and frequent digging, as much as three and five times a year. After this the tree may endure for centuries, for it possesses with its very slow growth so enormous a vitality that we call it imperishable. ... The olive tree is one of the educators of mankind towards higher civilization. It was not arbitrarily that the ancient Mediterranean peoples selected the olive as the symbol of peace and the civic virtues; or that the poets of the Old Testament took it as a figure of the health both of the nation and of the individual Israelite. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* As in California it is the dews that keep vegetation green during the dry season, so in Palestine, where rain does not fall from May to October, the heavy dews are refreshing and quickening. Abundant as the dews are God's mercies, and His love will revivify the Israelites, scorched, as one might say, by sin, even as the dew revives the scorched vegetation.

6. *His smell as Lebanon.* In many parts of the East the people are excessively fond of perfuming their garments. They sprinkle their clothing with sweet-scented oils extracted from spices or sandal-wood, and with a great variety of strangely perfumed waters. They make use of camphor, civet wood, sandal-wood, aloes, and even sometimes sew chips of perfumed wood into their garments. Reference is made to this custom in Solomon's Song, 4.11: the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Refer to pages 28-29 of this Guide for the study of the Book of Hosea. Our lesson is the last chapter of the Book, the prophet's final appeal to his countrymen for repentance, and his assurance of divine mercy and lovingkindness.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Keep in mind these truths so aptly expressed by Professor George Albert Coe: "The object of the mother is not to get as much bread and meat as possible down the child, but to give it that by which it can grow. Teach the Bible, to be sure, and such particular parts of it as will fit the child's needs,

but use it as a means, and not as an end." There is little in the text to-day that you can use as an end, but much as a means for the spiritual growth of your pupils.

Give only the general facts of the lesson: that Hosea urged the people of Israel to give up their idols and worship God: that he told them God would hear their penitent prayer and would bless them; that if they obeyed God they would keep on growing better. Adapt to your pupils the words of Rabbi Singer, p. 234. Teach them that just as they grow in size, so they should grow truer and nobler, p. 236.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. In the biography of the great scientist, Louis Agassiz, there is a vivid account of the descent once made by him into the heart of a glacier. A great rope was fastened about him, and he was slowly lowered by his assistants to a depth of one hundred and twenty-five feet. When he had finished his examination and was ready to signal the men to draw him up, he was appalled at the sight that met his upward gaze, at the huge icicles which, pointing downward, had not hindered his descent, but which like javelins might easily cut his rope in two as it was being drawn upward.

Descent is always easier than ascent, whether from the safe path into a glacier's crevasse and back again or from the path of righteousness into sin and back again. The Israelites had made the descent; can the prophet Hosea lead them safely back?

For Older Pupils. Records are being broken every day, whether in the speed of the ocean steamships, in the endurance power of automobiles, in the speed and safety of air locomotion, in the number of saloons driven out of business, in the amount given for missionary work, in the numbers enrolled in our Sunday-schools, in the number present on stormy days. So each one of us makes a new record day by day: sometimes it is a record-breaker, and sometimes a record-failure, sometimes a going beyond, and sometimes a falling behind, the standard we have previously attained. The record-making that is chronicled in our newspapers is that which exceeds what has been attained in the same line by others: the record-making that is kept regarding ourselves is that which has been gained or lost from the standard we have ourselves already set. Our goal is not to excel others, but to excel ourselves.

The prophet Hosea told the Israelites what their record was, and what their record might be.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Backsliding

Backsliding and Backsliders. Backsliding: to fall away, especially to abandon gradually the faith and practice of a religion that has been professed. This is Webster's definition. The term calls to our mind some one toiling up a hill, and then slipping backward. The spiritual life is an upward climb, and he who gives up the faith with which he starts and fails to put into practice the principles which govern that life, slips backward, backslides.

There are roads in Austria where the sign-boards say, *Rückgang verboten*, Return forbidden. Having once started on such a road (which is too narrow for carriages to pass), you must keep on to your destination. There is no such sign-board on the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life.

There are various degrees of backsliding—there is the persistent backslider, such as the one referred to by a colored brother at a church meeting in these words: "Brudder Baker keeps er fallin' from grace an' er habin' his name tuck off ob de book, an' den he comes back ergin; Brudder Techstone, I moves dat we buy er slate ter put Brudder Baker's name on ter keep from er mutilatin' der records ob de church."

There is the continuous backslider, who once having started on the backward decline, never regains his footing: a Judas who is first a thief, then a traitor, and then a suicide. When Ezra was about to go with a colony of Jews from

Babylon to Jerusalem to re-establish the worship of Jehovah in the Holy Land, he gathered his followers together near the river that runneth to Ahava, and as they passed before him in review he "found none of the sons of Levi": of almost every company of followers of Christ, there are some who will be lacking in the final review.

And there is the now-and-then backslider; a Peter who stumbles and falls, but rises repentant and presses onward. No one is sinless, and he who follows Hosea's exhortation, and returns unto the Lord with words of sincere repentance, will ever find Him ready to forgive and bless.

One Reason for Backsliding. I've heard 'em say that horses that be stumblers be a'most sure to come down if you let 'em go along with a creepin' kind o' jog-trot. And that's how Christian folks fall in general; going along so slow an' sleepy, down they come all of a heap, knockin' themselves all to bits a'most before they know where they are. *Daniel Quorm.*

I will heal their Backsliding. Some children have a habit of straying and getting lost. I have heard that, whenever a large number of boys and girls go out for a day's holiday together, one or two are sure to be missing when the time comes for going home. How do they manage to get lost? Perhaps they see a pretty flower or a butterfly, and in order to get it, they begin by going just a little way in another direction than that taken by the rest. Then they go a little farther in the wrong way, and perhaps without knowing it take a wrong turning, and so lose themselves by degrees.

It is most unpleasant, is it not, to find yourself lost? You feel quite alone and deserted, and it seems as if you can never get back home or find your friends again. But after a time, if you are sensible, you begin to think. You feel that you cannot have gone so very far after all. You wait till you meet some one, and you tell him where you live, and he will probably be kind enough to offer to see you home. But before you have got very far on your homeward way, what is most likely to happen? You will see some one looking for you—your father, or mother, or your elder brother or sister. They had not forgotten you, but they were looking for you all the time, and they are as glad to find you as you are to be found by them.

Now God is always looking for us, because we are always getting a little bit lost. He says: Do not go on getting farther and farther off; come back to Me and I will come back to you. God is so anxious for us to go back to Him that He meets us more than half way.

There is a beautiful story told by our wise men, which runs something to this effect: When God was about to create man He took into His counsel the angels that stood about His throne. "Create him not," said the Angel of Justice, "for if Thou dost, he will commit all kinds of wickedness against his fellow-men; he will be hard, and cruel, and dishonest, and unrighteous."

"Create him not," said the Angel of Truth, "for he will be false and deceitful to his brother-man, and even to Thee." "Create him not," said the Angel of Holiness; "he will follow that which is impure in Thy sight, and dishonor Thee to Thy face." Then stepped forward the Angel of Mercy (God's best beloved), and said: "Create him, O our heavenly Father, for when he sins and turns from the path of right and truth and holiness, I will take him tenderly by the hand, and speak loving words to him, and then lead him back to Thee."

And God created man. Condensed from *Sermons to Children,* by *Simeon Singer.*

II Penitence and Pardon

O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God. Hosea was not privileged to see a true response to his appeal. There was not moral depth enough in their hearts to have anything but a facile and evanescent repentance, born of emotion and withered at the first temptation as the fleeting mist is withered by the rising sun. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." They disappointed all the prophet's loving and wistful expectation for them; and belied their own providential history as a nation, and betrayed the gracious covenant which God had made with them. They were no better than the very heathen round

about them, no better than others who had not had their privileges and opportunities. *Hugh Black,* in *The Gift of Influence.*

The people of the Northern Kingdom, to whom Hosea prophesied, never did return to Jehovah; they abandoned their religion when they went into captivity, and in losing their religion lost their nationality, and have forever disappeared from the world's history. Looking for the Lost Tribes of Israel is like looking for the drops of rain which have fallen on the Great Desert, or for the cloud which the sun has drunk up in a July sky. But the love of God which Hosea experienced is eternal, and the power of that love and the joy of that love in the return of the repentant are eternal, and in this love, rejoicing to rescue from sin whoever will accept rescue, lies the secret of all restoration to life from apostasy, national or individual. Hosea saw God truly; for Israel he hoped beyond measure. *Lyman Abbott,* in *Life and Literature of the Hebrews.*

True Repentance. Repentance is not conviction; you can be convicted without repentance. It is one thing to be called at five o'clock in the morning, and another thing to get up. It is one thing to be awake, and another thing to arise. It is one thing to see your duty, and another thing to face it and do it like a man. It is one thing to have light, and another thing to have life. God took the trouble to awaken you, to convince you, and had you submitted, had you paid attention, you would have been a Christian. But you killed, you stifled, you resisted, you fought against it; you said "No;" you rolled over and went to sleep again.

Listen! In Bible language repentance is turning from sin to God, from sin to God. That is repentance—"from," "to." It is putting your hand on your heart and getting hold of the thing that has been your curse, and dragging it out, and saying: "There, Lord Jesus, that is it, and I will die before I will commit it again. I will turn from it now and forever." That is repentance. *Gypsy Smith.*

Divine Mercy Limitless. Hosea is very sure of the mercy and loving-kindness of God. If his rebellious countrymen, whose frequent and long-continued forgetfulness of their divine King caused him such anguish of heart, will repent, they will be forgiven even as Christ said the penitent prodigal was forgiven.

"Is it not cowardly to turn to God and ask for forgiveness for a sin that He has already forgiven in us a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand times, and that we have deliberately committed again?" questions an editorial in the *Sunday-School Times.* "Is there not a limit to the number of times when one may fairly expect such forgiveness? Ought we not to shrink from the unworthiness that could even prompt us to expect forgiveness unlimited after we have shown ourselves so utterly lacking in any claim on continued forgiveness? These questions press themselves in upon the minds of us all as we face the fact of our fresh failure in that sin which God has so often forgiven, and which we had hoped was to be put forever behind us long before now, because of God's loving mercy in pardoning it so freely. But they are questions that do not come to us from Him, nor from our worthier selves. Only the Devil prompts them. That was Judas' unpardonable failure: not his betrayal of Christ, but his refusal to seek God's forgiveness for that betrayal, and to believe that God's love was great enough to forgive such a sin. God has asked us to bring our every failure to Him and let Him, in the blood of His Son, blot it out. He draws no line: it is only cowardice and ingratitude for us to assume a limitation to the mercy of a Father whose love is infinite."

III Spiritual Growth

Hosea's Wonderful Picture. Could words better express how the divine power works in the human soul and causes it to blossom and bear fruit, growing in beauty and in usefulness, than Jehovah's words through Hosea in the fifth, sixth and seventh verses of this fourteenth chapter? He who yields himself to the divine influence shall become pure in heart, "blossoming as the lily;" shall become deeply rooted in Christian character, "casting forth his roots as Lebanon;" shall expand in the knowledge and love of God, "his

branches shall spread;" shall grow winsome, "his beauty shall be as the olive-tree and his smell as Lebanon;" shall become a blessing to others; "they that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the grain and blossom as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

You cannot stand still spiritually. You have seen a squirrel in a cage jump into the wheel and turn it: the faster he frisks the faster the wheel revolves, but he himself makes no progress. Our spiritual life can maintain no such changeless position: if we are not advancing, growing, we are going backward, losing ground.

The child in the home is measured from time to time. Once he was two feet high, then two feet two inches; time passes, four feet, five feet are reached. Each time that a gain in inches is discovered, how delighted he is! How anxious that he may be as tall as father, or some greatly admired friend! Then there comes a time when he stops growing; he will never be any taller. That time need never come in the spiritual life. However long one may live, his character should keep on growing, expanding, becoming nobler and nobler, with the passing years.

If each one in this class had been measured a year ago and then again to-day, should we find a gain in height? A loss? If there were a way in which each could have been measured spiritually, then and now, what would the result be? Here are some searching questions that I read recently, and I pass them on for your honest answers. You were once a little child; what have you done for yourself? What have you gained? What have you lost? You are stronger in muscle, stronger in intellect, stronger in body and mind; but what of the higher nature? Consider Paul's catalogue of faith, hope, love; have you gained or have you lost? Is it easier to pray, or harder, now? Have the experiences of life brought you nearer to God and made Him seem more to you, or have they carried you farther from Him and made Him seem more shadowy and unreal? What have you done with yourself; have you grown or have you lost?

We can and will grow. Thank God, we can grow! A tree is more wonderful than a mountain. The mountain is dead; the tree is a thing of life. The mountain is slowly crumbling away; the tree is growing and becoming the parent of new trees. How much more wonderful is a man than a tree! Made in the image of the eternal God, able to think His thoughts after Him, called to a blessed immortality, what a sacred heritage is his! And with a man as with a tree, growth is the Law of Life. When growth ceases, decay begins. We not only can, we *must* grow or we shall die.

How shall we grow? A more teachable Spirit, eager to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him; a sturdier Faith, a Faith that grasps the unseen Hand and holds it even amid the shadows; a Bolder Courage, that hails difficulties with delight and is ever on the offensive against wrong; a more consuming Love, a Love that forgets self and is lost in others; a Love that finds in service to God and man supreme satisfaction: are not here lines of growth which appeal to the heart of the Christian?

The words of Maltbie D. Babcock are on our lips to-day:

O that I may grow!
What though Time cuts his furrows in my face,
My heart may ever add grace unto grace,
Graces with added days still keeping pace.
O that I may grow!

Thank God we *can* grow, and by His grace we *will grow.* *Edward S. Ninde.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. Mal. 3.7.

The backslider's terrible lot is to have to return with enfeebled feet each step of the way along which he strayed; to make up inch by inch the leeway he has lost. *Henry Drummond.*

There are thousands of people called backsliders who never were frontsliders. *Gypsy Smith.*

If I cease becoming better I shall soon cease being good. *Cromwell.*

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HOSEA

A broken and a contrite heart,
O God, thou wilt not despise. Ps. 51.17.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Dew falls on vegetation and revives it and causes it to grow; but it does not fall on barren rocks, where it would be of no avail. The Lord is as the dew to human souls.

How much on the credit side would your spiritual balance-sheet this past year show?

Let us take to ourselves the counsel of him who advised his generation to lay this Book to heart, and knowing that the ways of the Lord are right, let us strive with His help to walk in them.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

The prophet Hosea entreats Israel to return to the Lord, and bids the people offer this penitent prayer: Take away all our iniquity and accept what in us is good: instead of burnt-offerings we offer our prayers. We will no longer trust in Assyria nor in Egypt, nor in idols, the work of our hands; but in Thee alone, Helper of the fatherless.

To this penitent prayer the Lord will respond: I will pardon their backsliding and love them freely, for my anger is turned away. I will bless Israel as the dew blesses the land, causing the nation to grow in beauty like the lily, in strength like the roots of the cedar of Lebanon, and in breadth like its branches, in beauty and usefulness like the olive-tree, and in fragrance like the cedar of Lebanon. Those who dwell under Israel's sheltering shade shall turn to Me; they shall revive as does the grain and blossom as does the vine.

In future I will have nothing more to do with idols, saith Israel. I have heard his prayer, and will look upon him with favor, replies the Lord. I am strong and vigorous as a green fir-tree, gratefully acknowledges Israel. From Me comes your prosperity, is the Lord's reminder.

Let him who would be wise and prudent know and understand the words of Hosea, adds a later writer: through them he may learn that the ways of the Lord are right, and that they determine the fate of all: the just walk in them without stumbling, but the evil-doers fall.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Book of Hosea. See pages of this book.
2. One must either lose or gain ground in the spiritual life.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Study the entire reign of Hezekiah, 2 K. 18-20; Isa. 36-39; 2 Ch. 29-32. 2. How old was Hezekiah when he began to reign? (2 K. 18.2). 3. Who was his father? (2 K. 18.1). 4. What sort of king was Ahaz? (Clipping, p. 240.) 5. What was Hezekiah's first reform? 6. Who before him had repaired the temple? 7. What four kings reigned in Judah between these two kings? 8. Who had worshipped idols? 9. How did the people of the Northern Kingdom receive Hezekiah's invitation to join in the keeping of the Passover at Jerusalem? (2 Ch. 30.5-11.) 10. What was the origin of the Passover? (Ex. 12.) 11. Why was the Passover not held at the regular time, in the first month? (2 Ch. 30.3.) 12. In Num. 9.10-11 what persons were granted the privilege of postponing the keeping of the Passover?

Questions to think about. 1. Give an account of the condition of Judah at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign. (Clipping, p. 241.) 2. Where and what was the brook Kidron? (Clipping, p. 241.) 3. In what earlier lesson did we learn of idols being cast into the Valley of the Kidron? (III of First Quarter.) 4. What caused the Levites to be ashamed, verse 15?

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Prophets, write what you have learned about Hosea and his Call to the People to Repent.

LESSON XI—JUNE 11

HEZEKIAH'S GREAT PASSOVER

Golden Text

Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. 16.7.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 30.1-27. Hezekiah's Great Passover. **T.** 2 Chron. 29.1-19. The Neglected Temple Cleansed. **W.** 2 Chron. 29.20-30. Joyful Resuming of Worship. **T.** 2 Chron. 29.31-36. Consecrating themselves unto the Lord. **F.** 2 Chron. 31.1-10. The Tithes for the Lord's House. **S.** 2 Chron. 31.11-21. The Service of the Lord's House Reorganized. **S.** 2 Chron. 35.1-19. The Great Passover under Josiah. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 30 PRINT vv. 13-27 COMMIT vv. 18-20

13 And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly. 14 And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. 15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the second month; and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt-offerings into the house of Jehovah. 16 And they stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Moses, the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood *which they received* of the hand of the Levites. 17 For there were many in the assembly that had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites had the charge of killing the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto Jehovah. 18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Jehovah pardon everyone 19 that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though *he be* not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary. 20 And Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. 21 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised Jehovah day by day, *singing* with loud instruments unto Jehovah. 22 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that had good understanding *in the service* of Jehovah. So they did eat throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace-offerings, and making confession to Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept *other* seven days with gladness. 24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the assembly for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25 And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. 27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

13. *The feast of unleavened bread.* On the fourteenth the paschal lamb was sacrificed (v. 15), and from the fourteenth to the twenty-first the unleavened bread was eaten: both names, passover and feast of unleaven bread, were given to the festival, as here and in verse 2.—*In the second month.* The first month, Nisan, corresponding to our month of April, was the regular time for keeping the passover. According to Num. 9.10,11, persons who for good reasons were prevented from keeping it at the regualr time might keep it in the second month. Hezekiah's passover could not be kept at the regular time because the temple was not then cleansed, 29.17.

14. *Took away the altars.* The idolatrous altars erected by Ahaz, 2 Ch. 28.24,25. The brazen serpent of Moses was destroyed, 2 K. 18.4.

15. *The priests and the Levites were ashamed.* They who should have led in the reform were spurred on by the people, vv. 1-12. See 29.34; 30.3.—*Burnt offerings.* As an atonement.

16. *They stood in their place.* On the north of the altar while slaying, Lev. 1.11, and on the south while offering the sacrifice.

17. *Therefore the Levites had charge.* The head of each household, if "sanctified" or "clean," slew the lamb destined for sacrifice, Ex. 12.6-7, but because there were many not sanctified, the priests performed this duty for them.—*The passover.* The paschal lamb.

18. *All Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun.* "The list of tribes given here does not agree with the list in v. 11, but in both cases it is probable that the Chronicler merely wishes by his list to designate men of the Northern Kingdom as opposed to those of the Southern. He could not make the distinction of using the term "Israel" here, for in Chronicles "Israel" as a rule is not used in opposition to Judah. Israel in Chronicles means the covenant people. In Kings, on the contrary, Israel generally means the "Northern Kingdom" (*Barnes*).—*Otherwise than is written.* See Num. 9.6.

19. *Every one that setteth his heart.* Or, *him that setteth his whole heart,* RVm.

20. *Healed the people.* Either healed their actual disease, or prevented their death when they ceremonially defiled the temple, Lev. 15.31.

22. *Spake comfortably.* Commended.—*Seven days.* From the fourteenth to the twenty-first.—*Making confession.* Or, *giving thanks,* RVm.

23. *Took counsel.* Resolved.—*Other seven days.* So Solomon held the dedication of the temple seven more days, 2 Ch. 7.8-9.

24. *Gave.* As a peace offering.

25. *Sojourners.* Non-Israelites, proselytes.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

14. *They took away the altars.* Hezekiah must have been greatly aided in his work of reform by the prophets Isaiah and Micah, who had attacked the corruption that spread over the land during the previous reign in long, stern warning, and whose ministry continued into this reign (Jer. 26.17-19). But the progress of reformation was naturally slow, and the writings of Isaiah indicate that, even later in Hezekiah's reign, there was much that was defective not only in the moral life of the community, but even in the usages of religion. The prophet's invections point to the continued prevalence of oppression and selfish luxury (30.12; 32.9); whilst graven and molten images were still objects of the peoples' adoration (30.22; 31.7). *G. W. Wade, Old Testament History.*

18. *Yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written.* No one is entitled to speak with greater authority on the limitations of ritual than a strong advocate of the sanctity of ritual like the Chronicler; and we may well note, as one of the most conspicuous marks of his inspiration, the sanctified common sense shown by his frank and sympathetic record of the irregularities of Hezekiah's passover. Doubtless emergencies had arisen even in his own experience of the great feasts of the temple that had taught him this lesson; and it says much for the healthy tone of the temple community in his day that he does

not attempt to reconcile the practice of Hezekiah with the law of Moses by any harmonistic quibbles. *W. H. Bennett,* in *The Books of Chronicles.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

18. *A multitude of the people had not cleansed themselves.* A missionary in India was teaching in the home of a Brahman when two of the children entered and ran to their mother. Drawing herself away the mother asked, "Have you bathed?" When they said they had not the mother scolded them severely, and sent them off to be sprinkled lightly with cold water. To the missionary the mother explained: "They have just come from your school, and have been with lower caste children, so they are unclean, and must not touch me till they have bathed."

18. *They ate the passover.* In the feast of the passover, the flight of the Israelites, its darkness, its hurry, and confusion, was acted year by year, as in a sacred drama. Night falls: the stars come out; the bright moon is in the sky; the household gathers round, and then takes place the meal, of which every part is marked by the almost frantic haste of the first celebration, when Pharaoh's messengers were expected every instant to break in with the command: "Get you forth among my people." The guests of each household at the moment of the meal rise and stand around the table. Their feet, usually bare when in the house, are shod as for a journey. Each member of the house holds a staff, as if for immediate departure; the long Eastern garments of the men are girt up, for the same reason, round their loins. The roasted lamb is torn to pieces, each snatching in his eager fingers the morsel which he might not else have time to eat. Not a fragment is left for the morning, as if it would find them gone and far away. The cakes of bread which they break and eat are tasteless for the want of leaven, as if there had been no leisure to prepare it, and finally the thanksgiving for the deliverance is always presented. *Stanley, Jewish Church.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Five weeks ago we had a lesson about Uzziah, king of Judah. After a reign of fifty-two years, of almost unbroken prosperity, he was succeeded by his son Jotham. The earlier chapters of Isaiah tell of the luxury and oppression of Jotham's reign. The reign of Ahaz, Jotham's son and successor, was one of almost unbroken disaster. He was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. He was an idolater of the worst type, not only worshipping idols and filling Judah with them, but also practising the cruel heathen rites.

Tiglath-Pileser in his Chariot

Ahaz came to the throne in a time of trouble. Assyria was beginning her period of conquest, when she gathered in one after another of the nations of the western world. The kings of Syria and Israel wished Ahaz to join them in alliance against Assyria. They tried to force him into such an alliance (Isa. 7.1-9). They attacked Judah and took mutitudes away captive. Edomites and Philistines pillaged the country. Isaiah tried to induce

Ahaz to rely on Jehovah, but in spite of his remonstrance, Ahaz turned to Assyria. Tilgath-pileser came to his assistance, but imposed a burden of tribute on Judah and aroused the jealousy of Egypt. Thus the step was taken which eventually ended in the captivity of Judah.

Strange as it seems, Hezekiah the son and successor of such a king as Ahaz, "trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. And Jehovah was with him: whithersoever he went forth he prospered," 2 K. 18.5-7. Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign and he reigned twenty-nine years. He began his religious reforms in the first year of his reign. There were heathen altars everywhere in Jerusalem, idolatrous high places throughout Judah, the temple was polluted and closed, the lamps put out, the sacred vessels cut in pieces, and the priests and Levites were scattered. Hezekiah opened the temple and directed the Levites to cleanse it. When the work was completed, he re-inaugurated the temple services with a great dedication fast, with its sin-offerings and burnt-offerings, thank-offerings and peace-offerings. "So the service of the house of Jehovah was set in order."

Hezekiah's next step was to send out letters by carriers summoning all Israel as well as Judah, from Beersheba even to Dan, to keep the Passover at Jerusalem. It was too late for the regular time in the first month, and therefore he arranged for its celebration in the second month. The Northern Kingdom had been invaded by Tiglath-pileser of Assyria and some of the people taken away captive, and Hezekiah urged those of that kingdom who had escaped to turn again unto Jehovah that His anger might be turned from them. Some of the northern tribes laughed his messengers to scorn, but certain men of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The idolatrous altars were cast into the brook Kidron. The Kidron is a winter torrent, dry in summertime, which separates Jerusalem on the east from the Mount of Olives. Thence the valley bed extends southeastwardly through the Wilderness of Judah to the Dead Sea. It is often spoken of in the Old Testament as a place for casting out rubbish.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Study the account of Ahaz' reign and of Hezekiah's early reforms till you know them well and can make your pupils see them in contrast the one with the other. Make Hezekiah your hero. Show how eager he was to bring the people back to the worship of the Lord, how he had the temple cleansed (this may be made very real), how he sent messengers throughout the land to urge the people to come to Jerusalem to keep the passover, how the messengers were received, and how the passover was kept; but pass by the irregularities in the keeping of the passover, which would prove an unprofitable subject for your pupils. The first topic may be the lesson thought that you leave with your pupils, especially its application to them as shown in the story of Terry, p. 242.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. What king of Judah made it his first duty to undertake the repair of the temple? (Third lesson of this Quarter). How old was he when he came to the throne? How many years passed before the temple was repaired? After about one hundred and thirty-five years had gone by the temple was again in need of repair, at least of cleansing and of having its sacred vessels restored. King Hezekiah had this done. How old was he when crowned king of Judah? How long did he wait before beginning the much-needed work upon the temple? How long did he wait to have the work carried out? What festival did he then celebrate?

For Older Pupils. We have come to one of the most important reigns in the Kingdom of Judah, that of Hezekiah, one of the noblest of her kings. (2 K. 18.5). He was a strong, faithful, godly man, high in his ideals, en-

thusiastic in his leadership. His first concern on assuming his office was to accomplish a religious reformation. There were a faithful few who had been kept loyal to Jehovah by the teachings of the prophet Isaiah, but the great mass of the people had sunk to the lowest levels of idolatry. The country, moreover, was passing through very dark times politically.

(Continue with the Historical Background).

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Spurred on by the Example of Others

The Priests were ashamed of themselves.

Be noble, and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own,

counsels our poet Lowell. It was the nobleness of the people, of the laymen of Israel, that caused the nobleness of the priests and Levites to rise in majesty to meet it. Seemingly that nobleness was dead in the priests, for in the 34th verse of the preceding chapter we are told that the Levites helped them in flaying the burnt-offerings until the priests had sanctified themselves, for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. But that nobleness was in reality only sleeping, for when they saw how the people rose to the occasion they were ashamed of themselves. They were spurred on to the performance of their duty by the example of the people.

Induced Currents for Good or Evil. Let two wires be hung side by side and yet not touch each other. Then send a current of electricity over one wire, and there will be a weaker reproduction of it in the other. This is the reason why when you listen at the telephone you can often hear other voices. The wires have not crossed, but there is an induced current from another wire in the one to which your 'phone is attached. It is due to this also that we can telegraph from a moving train. A wire is run from the baggage car into proximity to the wires on the telegraph poles along the track. Then the wire is brought back into the car to complete the circuit and attached to an instrument. The current which passes over the wires on the poles induces a similar though weaker current in the wire running from the train, and vice versa. Thus messages can be sent and read by delicate instruments.

Now the whole question of moral influence in life is the question of induced currents. Why is it that when you stand before a friend whom you know to be selfish and worldly, you instantly have to fight the same temptation in your own heart? The strong current of selfishness with which that life is charged induces a similar current in your own heart for the moment, and you have to fight against it. Just so when you stand before a friend who is pure and holy, and whose purposes are consecrated, there comes into your own heart the induced current of these same holy aspirations. No life is so pure that it does not feel some induced current when standing before that which is base and ignoble, and no life is so ignoble that it does not feel some aspirations to holiness when standing before a life that is pure, and true, and Christlike. *Wilton Merle Smith,* in *Giving a Man Another Chance.*

How Terry made his Companions ashamed. Terry Dempster and other boys were on their way to school. They passed the fruit-stall at the corner. Terry said good morning to the woman that kept it. He was glad Will Mace stopped to buy bananas, because he liked to look at her.

She gave Will the bananas, and while he was putting them into his book-bag she held out his change. Terry took it for him. One of the pennies he shoved back across the counter. "She was giving you a cent too much," he explained to Will, as he handed him the others.

A big, red apple had rolled off the stall and along the street until it had turned the corner. Terry picked it up and ran back with it. "You might have taken that with you," said Will. "Nobody would have seen." Terry laughed. He did not seem to think that Will expected any other answer.

Two or three days later Terry was playing croquet at recess. The game

was getting very exciting. Terry's ball was in a bad position. "You can move it out from the hedge, Terry," said one of the big boys who was looking on. "Wait, let me show you."

"Not so far as that, I can't!" cried Terry. "That's very far!" "Oh, yes, you can," said the big boy, easily. "You're all right now. Go ahead." "It's more than a mallet's length," said Terry, measuring. "I was sure it was." He moved the ball back six inches and tried for his wicket. He missed it. He lost the game.

"Isn't it a pity," said the big boy, "that you can't cheat a little at croquet just for sport?" "I don't think it is," said Terry. "I'd rather you couldn't. It would spoil it. It wouldn't be any fun if it wasn't fair."

One day when school was out, Terry had got almost to the corner where the fruit-stand was. Suddenly he stoped short in dismay. "Oh dear! I'll have to go back! I left my copy-book. Miss Stone said I was to copy over at home the page that I blotted so much." "Tell her you forgot it," said Bobby Price. "You did." "But only for a half a block," said Terry. "That wouldn't satisfy her, I guess." "I guess not," said Bobby. And he didn't say another word.

The weeks and the months went by until the first school term was over and the second had begun. One Saturday afternoon Mrs. Dempster came home from down town and hunted through the house for Terry. "What do you think," she asked him, "that Miss Stone told me ten minutes ago? She said that she liked to have my boy for a scholar; she thought that the other boys were learning to be more honorable from him."

Terry's face was very bright at first. But soon he shook his head doubtfully. "I guess Miss Stone didn't mean me," he said. "I don't see how she could have meant me. Because I can't remember ever being honorable before the other boys. I haven't had any chances." *Sally Campbell,* in *Sunday-School Times.*

II The Spirit not the Letter of the Law

God looketh on the Heart. Very irregular was Hezekiah's observance of the passover. He held it in the second month instead of the first month; he allowed those who were ceremonially unclean to partake of the passover, when according to the prescribed rules they should be visited with terrible punishment for such sacrilege; and he prolonged the observance of the feast to twice its customary length. But his reasons were good and his purpose was true. The temple had not been purified in time for the keeping of the passover in the first month; many of the worshippers had come from a distance and were ignorant of the ritual as regards ceremonial cleanliness—to have excluded them from the feast would have been to destroy their new-found desire for worship; the prolongation of the feast increased the loyal zeal for Jehovah. God looked not on the outward appearance, his seeming disobedience, but on the heart, his really loyal obedience. Hezekiah wrought that which was good and right and faithful before Jehovah his God, and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered, 2 Ch. 31.20, 21.

Christ's Teachings. In Christ's view, true worship consists in having a pure heart and treating all men as brothers. The act was of small importance. The important thing was the inward sentiment which inspired it. In this position He was no longer a Jew, for to the true Jew the rite was everything. Whatever might be the inward disposition, it was simply necessary to put one's self on right terms with God by performing the rite. No doubt Jesus said that the tithe must be paid even of "mint and anise and cummin," for the Law ordains it and He never abolished one stroke of the letter of the Law; but He rejected the Pharisaic casuistry on the observation of the Sabbath, He did not abstain from certain meats, and He did not make a point of fasting. It was all one, whether or not one practiced these external acts. He had no wish to make an abrupt change in common usage; He wished only to change men's hearts, secure in advance that when the heart was changed the external change would follow of itself. He gave no decree doing away with one thing, re-

taining another, but He implanted the inward leaven which little by little would work through the dough, transforming it and making it a new material. *Edmond Stapfer.*

III The Comeliness of Praise

Hezekiah and the Levites. Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that had good understanding in the service of Jehovah. How singular that word *comfortably,* and yet how fitting, for his words of commendation must have been to them a comfort. It had been long since the Levites had been called upon for service in the sanctuary, and they were in need of encouragement.

Possibly the Levites' knowledge of their duties was somewhat faulty, but, as Paul Leicester Ford somewhere says, the value of a compliment is not in its truthfulness, but in its being truth to the one who speaks it. There is a recent story in which the hero is a business failure. He tries many things and fails in them all. At last a friend sends him to a country town and supports him till he is able to get into some work. There he finds a position that he is capable of filling with marked success, and his partner frequently compliments him upon his business sagacity. He knows that the words are not deserved, that he is no bright and shining business light, but those sincere words spur him on to renewed effort.

It may well be that Hezekiah appreciated the difficulties of the Levites' tasks, and therefore he could truthfully praise what he knew was not perfect service. Mr. Gladstone once showed his knowledge and appreciation of difficulties, his willingness to make allowance because of them, and his desire to encourage by words of commendation. When Chancellor of the Exchequer he received from one of the clerks in the Treasury Office estimations for the budget in which there was a mistake of several millions. Mr. Gladstone made his taxation proposal on the basis of the figures handed him, and not till after he had made his budget speech was the error in the figures discovered. The trouble this caused was very great, and the clerk expected nothing less than dismissal. One day Mr. Gladstone sent for him, and he answered the summons with quaking heart. But instead of the expected lecture and dismissal, he heard Mr. Gladstone complimenting him on the skill and patience and accuracy he had shown for so many years in dealing with the intricacies of the national accounts!

Praise is Comely for the Upright. At the meetings of the Junta Club, which was founded by Benjamin Franklin, one of the questions regularly asked of each member was: "Do you know of a fellow citizen who has lately done a worthy action, deserving praise and imitation?" If each one in our city would ask himself that question and then fulfill his duty, in what a different atmosphere we should be living! To speak comfortably to others, to commend in them what we can honestly commend, is to give them the best kind of encouragement; for recognition of worth is the breath of life to every soul.

"There's folks that are smart and folks that are entertaining and folks that are just as pretty to look at as pictures," an old country woman once said, "but give me every time the kind that heartens you up."

SENTENCE SERMONS

Them that honor Me will I honor. 1 Sam. 2.30.

But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Mt. 6.33.

We can never begin good things too early. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Ritual is made for man, and not man for ritual. *W. H. Bennett.*

The less must always give way to the greater. *Joseph Parker.*

Where conscience has no doubts, we should have no dawdling. *Maclaren.*

It is by God's offers and by our opportunities that we shall be judged and by which we shall be condemned. *Mark Guy Pearse.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Do you like to have another express an honest appreciation of your work?

Then do you not think that another would like to have you express your honest appreciation of his work? Do not be stingy in "speaking comfortably" to others. There is no one in whom we cannot find something to commend.

A sparrow is not a song-bird we all know, but it has been claimed that one sparrow actually learned the nightingale's song. The sparrow has the right muscles, but he does not use them, and this particular sparrow, like the Levites in Jerusalem, was spurred on to do what he could by seeing what another could do. Do you make good use of your capabilities? When you see what others do with their talents, it should make you unearth yours, if it has been buried.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The summons to the passover, 1-12.
II. The passover kept, 13-22.
III. The passover prolonged, 23-27.

When Hezekiah became king of Judah he had the temple opened and cleansed and its sacred vessels restored. When this work was completed and the various offerings had been sacrificed, it was too late to observe the passover in the first month; therefore the king took counsel with his princes and others and decided to have it kept the month following. All Israel and Judah were summoned to the passover at Jerusalem. Some of the people in the Northern Kingdom mocked his messengers, but many of the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun came, and with all Judah they made a very great assembly.

The idolatrous altars that had been erected throughout Jerusalem in the reign of Ahaz the people took and cast into the brook Kidron, before they sacrificed the paschal lambs on the fourteenth of the month. The priests and Levites, seeing the zeal of the people, were ashamed of their delay, and after making themselves ceremonially clean according to the law, they carried out their duties. Many of the people were not ceremonially cleansed and were therefore unfit to partake of the passover; for them Hezekiah besought God's pardon. For seven days the people kept the feast with great gladness, and the king commended the Levites for their part in the exercises. Yet another seven days the feast was prolonged and great was the joy in Jerusalem. The ceremonies ended with the blessing and prayer of the Levites.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Consecrated common sense. 2. The character and power of Hezekiah.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. How many kings were there in Israel between Jeroboam and Hoshea, and how did their reigns come to an end? (2 K. 15. 8-31. Clipping, p. 250.) 2. To what king of Assyria did Hoshea pay tribute, and under what king was the nation taken captive? (Clipping, p. 250.) 3. In what year was Samaria taken? 4. How long did the Northern Kingdom last? 5. Who was king in Judah when the end came in the Northern Kingdom? 6. What causes that led to the captivity does the writer of Kings enumerate? 7. Read David's warning of what the result of forsaking God would be, 1 Ch. 28.1-9. 8. Read Amos' prediction of the captivity, 7.1-9. 9. Read Isaiah's words in regard to the fall of Samaria, 28.1-4. 10. What history is covered by the Second Book of Kings?

Questions to think about. 1. Name some of the prophets who had warned Israel. 2. Prophets who had warned Judah. 3. Which two kings of Israel did the most to turn the people from the worship of Jehovah? (Jeroboam who introduced the calf-worship, and Ahab, who introduced the worship of Baal.) 4. What does "walking in the statutes of the nations" mean? 5. What were the high places, pillars, Asherim? (Clipping, pp. 71, 72, 81.) 6. What advantages and what disadvantages had Israel had over Judah? (Clipping, p. 247.) 7. What external causes led to the Captivity? (Clipping, p. 247.) 8. What became of the ten tribes of Israel? (Clipping, p. 248.) 9. What was the origin of the Samaritans of the time of the Gospels? (2 K. 17.24-41 and clipping, p. 248.)

Note-book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of Hezekiah's Great Passover.

LESSON XII—JUNE 18

THE DOWNFALL OF SAMARIA

Golden Text

He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Prov. 29.1.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 17.1-18. The Downfall of Samaria. **T.** 2 Kings 16.1-4; 2 Chron. 28.1-4. Ahaz' devotion to Idolatry. **W.** 2 Kings 16.5-9.; 2 Chron. 28.16-21. The Help of Man that Proved a Delusion. **T.** 2 Kings 16.10-20; 2 Chron. 28.22-27. The Help of God that Proved a Delusion. **F.** 2 Kings 17.19-41. The People Brought in by the Assyrian King. **S.** Isaiah 7.1-24. Isaiah Giving a Sign to Ahaz. **S.** Isaiah 8.1-22. Isaiah Prophesying Israel's Captivity. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Kings 17.1-18 PRINT vv. 1-14 COMMIT v. 14

1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel, *and reigned* nine years. 2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him. 3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute. 4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. 5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, 8 and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made. 9 And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God: and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city; 10 and they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree; 11 and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger; 12 and they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13 Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14 Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *In the twelfth year of Ahaz.* This is inconsistent with 2 K. 15.30, 33; the date of Hoshea's accession was 733 B. C. Hoshea is sometimes called Hosea; do not confound him with the prophet of that name.

3. *Shalmaneser.* The Assyrian monuments show that this king reigned between Tiglath-pileser and Sargon II, 727-722 B. C.

4. *So king of Egypt.* "This king, whose name should perhaps be written Seve, is generally identified with Sabako, the first king of the 25th dynasty, though some authorities regard him as a petty prince who was vassal of the Pharaoh."—*The King of Assyria shut him* (Hoshea) *up.* As for Samaria, her king was cut off as the foam upon the water, Hos. 10.7.

6. *The King of Assyria took Samaria.* Shalmaneser had meanwhile died, and this king was his successor, Sargon II, who reigned from 723 to 705 B. C.—*Carried Israel away into Assyria.* Thus the Northern Kingdom, "the Lost Ten Tribes," was blotted out from the pages of history. It was Tiglath-pileser who first introduced the system of deportation, 1 Ch. 5.26. According to Sargon's inscription, 27,280 were carried away captive; many must have been left in the land, see 2 Ch. 34.9.—For the places mentioned see the Geographical Background.

7. *It was so because.* Verses 7-18 give the causes that led to the captivity: Dr. Maclaren calls them "a post mortem inquiry into the diseases that killed a kingdom."—*Who brought them up out of the land of Egypt.* Ex. 14.15-30.—*Had feared other gods.* See Judges 6.10.

8. *Walked in the statutes of the nations.* Lived as did the heathen nations.—*Whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel.* As told in the Book of Judges.—*Of the kings of Israel.* Compare the oft-repeated remark about the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherein he made Israel to sin.—*Which.* The statutes.

9. *Did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah.* "This refers to the attempt to combine the worship of God and of idols: the charge is of covering idolatry with a cloak of Jehovah worship" (*Maclaren*).—*High places.* See p. 81.—*From the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city.* The towers were for the lonely watchmen who guarded their flocks far from the fortified cities; the words show how widely scattered were the idolatrous "high places."

10. *Pillars.* See p. 72.—*Asherim.* See p. 71.

12. *Jehovah had said unto them.* See Ex. 20.4; Dt. 12.31.

13. *Jehovah testified by every prophet.* The prophets bore witness of Jehovah's will, exhorting and warning the people.—*Unto Israel.* Through Ahijah, Jehu the son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Obed, Amos, and Hosea.—*Unto Judah.* Through Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, Micah, and Isaiah.—*Seer.* He that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer, 1 S. 9.9.

14. *Hardened their neck like to the neck of their fathers.* See Ex. 32.9; 33.3; Acts 7.51. "Like some perverse ox in the yoke, stiffening his neck and standing the very picture of brute obstinacy" (*Maclaren*).

15. *Vanity.* Idols.

16. *All the host of heaven.* The stars.

17. *They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire.* They practiced the cruelest rites of the heathen. In the hollow interior of the god Moloch a fire was kindled and when the arms became red hot, children were thrown into them and burned to death. See Jer. 19.5.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

6. *The king of Assyria took Samaria.* The kingdom of the Ten Tribes was brought to an end after a separate existence of not much more than two hundred years. That its downfall preceded that of the inferior state of Judah was really due to the very causes which gave to it its greater importance. Its superiority to the Southern Kingdom was the consequence of its advantage in respect not only of extent and fertility, but of trading facilities, inasmuch as it was traversed by the principal commercial routes leading from Egypt to Phœnicia and the Euphrates. But its wealth and productiveness excited cupidity, whilst its situation upon the great arteries of traffic which swelled its prosperity, rendered it accessible to invasion, as is shown by the repeated sieges sustained by its capital, Samaria. Judah, on the other hand, though smaller and weaker, was much less vulnerable. It lay off the main line of march pursued by the armies of the greater Eastern powers; and when penetrated, offered little to repay the cost of acquisition. Judah's isolation and comparative

poverty were thus sources of strength, and enabled it to outlast (as will be seen) by nearly one hundred and fifty years its more favored rival. *G. W. Wade,* in *Old Testament History.*

6. *Carried Israel away into Assyria.* It is clear that the popular modern tradition that the ten tribes of Israel were lost is entirely without foundation. The small groups of nine or ten thousand colonists, which were settled in different parts of the Assyrian empire, were doubtless in time assimilated by the different peoples among whom they settled. The racial instinct and the popular faith of Israel were not at this time sufficiently strong to preserve the integrity of these widely scattered groups of exiles. If any did remain loyal to their race and religion, they probably found their way in time back to Israel or else assimilated with the later Judean exiles. The twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and ninety captives, who, according to the annals of Sargon, were

From the Facade of Sargon's Palace According to Botta. Monuments of Ninive

transported at this time, constitued only a small fraction of the total population of Northern Israel. But even though the leaders were deported, the peasants and common people remained to till the land and occupy the cities.

The biblical narrative states that Sargon brought colonists from Babylonia and other parts of his empire, to take the place of the leaders who had been deported from the province of Samaria. Babylon and Kutu, and possibly Sippar on the middle Euphrates, may be identified as the cities from which these colonists were brought. Another band of captives from Hamath in northern Syria was also brought at this time to Samaria. Ezra 42.10 speaks of colonists introduced by the later Assyrian kings. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. Sargon also refers to a rebellion in 720 B. C., two years after the fall of the city, in which the people of Samaria participated. It is probable, therefore, that the colonists mentioned in the biblical narrative were not all imported at once but at different times during the next two or three decades.

Although Northern Israel ceased henceforth to be an independent state and was merged into the Assyrian empire, the older Hebrew population remained and soon assimilated the foreign colonists. The Biblical narrative states that in time the foreign colonists themselves desired to worship the God of the land, and that a Hebrew priest was sent to instruct them in the religion of Jehovah. The later history of the Samaritans indicates clearly that Jehovah continued to be worshipped at the high places in the north. The blending with the foreign cults was easy because the popular religion of Jehovah in the north at this time still retained many of the old heathen ideas and institutions. As the Biblical historian states, this blending with the foreign religions gave to the faith and customs of the Samaritans many heathen elements which they long continued to retain.

The mingling with foreign blood also affected the character of the Samaritans themselves. The primary aim of the Assyrians was realized; for at this time the spirit of Northern Israel was broken. Before the many conquerors, who in succeeding ages swept over Palestine, the Samaritans, as a rule, readily submitted and thus escaped the rigors of siege and bloody conquest. The result was that they prospered under foreign dominance, while the power of their Jewish kinsmen to the south was repeatedly broken. These facts doubt-

less explain why through all the ages the Samaritans have survived. A little group of them, less than a hundred, still live together at Nablus, the ancient Shechem, under the shadow of their sacred mountain Gerizim, and worship Jehovah as did their ancestors at the same holy site. Of all the many petty peoples which lived in Palestine in ancient times, they alone remain. *Charles Foster Kent,* in *The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah.*

13. *Jehovah testified unto Israel by every prophet and every seer.* The supreme miracle of Israel's history is that out of this period of overwhelming doubt there arose certain men like Amos and Hosea, whose faith was strengthened rather than daunted by the problems of the hour, and who beheld with clear vision, not a God weak or capricious who ruled as merely the champion of little Israel, but one supreme God of justice and love, who absolutely and justly controlled the forces of nature as well as the affairs of men. They recognized that the impending advance of Assyria was not because Jehovah was powerless or regardless of the fortunes of His people; it was rather because of Israel's deep-seated guilt. They appreciated the necessity for some great revolutionizing experience which would turn the people from their apostasy and crimes to the recognition of the character and demands of the one true God who had ever guided them from the first, and had in store for them a destiny, if they were but prepared for it, far more glorious than popular poet had ever pictured. Assyria, therefore, was, in their eyes, Jehovah's agent, not of mere judgment, but of that discipline which was necessary before Israel would be prepared for the noble destiny which awaited it.

The Northern Israelites as a whole failed utterly to respond to the plain, convincing appeals of their noblest prophets. Hence the nation lost its life, as Amos and Hosea had predicted. A few thoughtful souls doubtless paid heed, and in their own spiritual experience realized, in the face of public and private disaster, the truth of the words which the prophets had proclaimed. Northern Israel lost its life, but Judah became the heir of its rich spiritual heritage, and preserved and transmitted it, so that to-day that exalted ethical spiritual monotheism, first revealed to a few earnest men and by them flashed before the bewildered vision of the corrupt rulers and leaders of Northern Israel, has become the possession and inspiration of all mankind. *Charles Foster Kent,* in *The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah.*

14. *They would not hear, but hardened their neck.* See Isaiah's words, Isa. 28.1-4.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

4. *Hoshea had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria.* This intrigue afterwards brought on a war between Sargon and So, or Sabaco, in which at length the Assyrians were victorious.

Impressions of the seals of most of the Assyrian monarchs may be seen in the British Museum: these were impressed on clay, which was then burnt and affixed to the document: and without a seal none were valid. Often the document has perished, but the seal remains, perforated for the thongs which attached it, and of which the ashes can be detected. On one of these pieces of clay are the seals of the king of Assyria and "So" king of Egypt, side by side. The lump of clay was found at Nimroud and the holes through which passed the parchment thong that attached it can be seen. On it are the distinctly legible impressions of two seals side by side, with the marks in the clay of the finger and thumb which impressed it. Tirhakah, the king defeated by the Assyrians near Lachish, was So's immediate successor. A peace having been concluded between the two monarchs, the royal signets, thus found together, were attached to the treaty which was laid up in the royal archives. While the document has perished by time, this singular proof of the alliance is still preserved, forming one of the most remarkable instances on record of the illustration of Scripture history. *H. B. Tristram,* in *Eastern Customs.*

6. *The king of Assyria took Samaria.* This king, Sargon II, called himself, "Sargon the Later" to distinguish him from the illustrious Sargon I, who lived about 3,800 B. C. He founded a magnificent city at Dur-Sargon, the modern Khorsbad, near the site of old Nineveh. His palace which covered twenty-five acres and was fortified by walls and towers was one of the most gorgeous of

the East. In the ruins of his palace, uncovered in 1843 by the French consul Emile Botta, large numbers of inscriptions and bas-reliefs illustrative of his reign have been discovered. One inscription is as follows: "Samerina (Samaria) I besieged, I captured. 27,290 people dwelling in it, I carried away. 50 chariots I collected from them and the rest (of the people) I allowed to retain their possessions. My commander-in-chief I placed over them, and the tribute of the former king I placed upon them." In another parallel text these words are added: "I settled there the men of countries conquered by my hand"; see verse 24 of our chapter.

From one of the alabaster reliefs the photograph was taken of the mighty warrior himself as reproduced in our large illustration.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The last great king of Israel was Jeroboam II, who died while Uzziah (lesson VI) was on the throne of Judah. Israel then entered on the last stage of its history: king after king ascended the throne, misruled for a brief period and was assassinated; moral and religious chaos reigned within, such as the prophet Hosea describes; and dangers continually threatened from without, for Assyria was bent on conquering the kingdom, and Egypt was looking on with jealous gaze.

Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II, after a few months' reign was slain by Shallum, and Shallum after only a month on the throne was slain by Menahem. Menahem gave tribute of a thousand talents of silver to Tiglath-pileser III, which he exacted from the rich men in his kingdom for that king's protection. (Tiglath-pileser was a Babylonian prince formerly known as Pulu, or Pul, 2 K. 15:19, who had usurped the throne of Assyria.)

Menahem's son Pekahiah was slain after a brief reign and his throne seized by Pekah, one of his officers. Pekah so feared the power of Syria, that he formed a confederacy with Rezin, the king of Syria, that nation which had been Israel's bitter foe for more than a century, and the two tried to force Ahaz, king of Judah, to join them against Assyria. Ahaz refused, Pekah and Rezin invaded the territory and carried many captives back to Samaria, whose release the prophet Oded secured. Ahaz paid no heed to Isaiah's warnings and appealed to Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for aid. The latter attacked Israel and Syria. In 734 B. C. he conquered northern Israel as far south as the plain of Esdraelon and took thousands away captive, and in 732 Damascus "fell before him." A large clay tablet found in the ruins of the palace at Nimrud, and now in the British Museum, contains the official records of his reign. It begins thus: Palace of Tukulti-Apil-Esharra, the Great King, the powerful king, the king of the world, the king of Assyria, the king of Babylon, the king of the land of Shinar and Accad, the king of the Four Quarters; the mighty, the brave, who by help of Asshur his Lord brake in pieces like a potter's vessel the whole of them that obeyed him not, like a flood overwhelmed them, and gave them over to the wind."

Tiglath-pileser claims to have slain Pekah and to have appointed Hoshea in his stead and to have exacted from him a tribute of a thousand talents of silver and ten talents of gold. The Bible narrative says that Hoshea slew Pekah; doubtless Hoshea owed his position to Assyria.

In 728 Tiglath-pileser died and was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV (727-723), and then Hoshea ventured to defy the Assyrian power and turn to Egypt for support. Here our lesson takes up the history.

Samaria was taken in 722 B. C. The northern kingdom lasted 215 years after the division of Solomon's kingdom and accession of Jeroboam in 937 B. C. During this time there had been nine dynasties and nineteen kings, while there was but one dynasty save for Athaliah's reign, and only twelve kings, in Judah.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Assyria was originally a small district lying south and west of the Mountains of Kurdistan, Armenia, east of the Tigris River, and north of the Upper Zab.

The limits of the kingdom were extended till it included all Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and parts of Asia Minor and Egypt. *Nineveh,* its capital, was on the Tigris River six hundred miles from the Gulf of Persia.

The location of *Kalah* is not known, but it is believed to have been in Mesopotamia. The *Habor* is the river now known as the Khabour, a tributary of the Euphrates, *Gozan* was a part of Mesopatamia. The *cities of the Medes* were south of the Caspian Sea.

Study the large colored map. Copy on your board the map on page 53.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Begin with the thought of verses 7-14, which tell how the people in this northern kingdom had kept on sinning, forgetting God and worshipping idols. Recall by questions the golden calves which Jeroboam built, the guilt of Ahab, Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal and its lesson, and Hosea's words of warning in our lesson two weeks ago, as he urged the people of Israel to return to God. During all this time the people had been warned again and again by God through the prophets, but they would not be warned. At last the time of punishment came. Samaria, their capital, was besieged (explain what this means) for three years, and the people were taken away as slaves to Assyria, far in the east.

As you draw on the blackboard the outlines of the map on p. 53, and locate Samaria and Nineveh the capital of Assyria, describe the long journey of the sad-hearted Israelites to a strange land.

Mr. Sully tells of a little boy who said to his mother that if he could ask God for what he liked, he would ask God to love him when he was naughty. God still loved the Israelites, as He does a naughty boy, tell your pupils, but like a naughty boy they had to be punished. They would not obey the prophets, and turn from their evil way. Use the illustration of the blind man, p. 252.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. In earlier days in Germany parents told their children that Santa Claus always had a companion called Klaubauf. Wherever Santa Claus went with his gifts Klaubauf went, too, with his basket in which he carried off children who had been naughty. Of course there was no Klaubauf, but the children were in such terror of him that some of them had convulsions, and then the Germans passed a law forbidding parents to talk about Klaubauf.

The Israelites had been told again and again that if they continued in their evil ways they should be taken captive, carried off to another land. It was no imaginary Klaubauf with which the prophets threatened them. Did they fear the warning?

For Older Pupils. Have any of you heard of or perhaps seen Houdini, the wonderful wizard who performs such marvelous feats? I have seen him handcuffed, bound with ropes and then nailed into a box, from all of which he made his escape unaided. There are no prison doors so securely locked and bolted that they can imprison him. There seems to be no deceit in the matter, he actually does all sorts of impossible things. One day he stood on Harvard Bridge, which connects Cambridge with Boston, and had his hands handcuffed together behind his back, clasps put around his arms just below the shoulder, and an iron yoke around his neck, all of them, yoke and clasps and handcuffs, fastened together with a steel chain. Thus bound and weighted down with sixteen pounds of iron and steel he leaped into the swift current of Charles River, twenty-six feet below. What happened? In forty seconds his hand was thrust out of the water holding the opened hand-cuffs!

We have seen the kings and people of the northern kingdom of Israel handicapping themselves with weight after weight of sin, till their hands were helplessly tied. We have seen them hastening on for a final plunge, and to-day we learn the result. It is a sad story.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Turn Ye

Turn ye from your Evil Ways, and keep My Commandments. This was

the message of all the prophets from Samuel to Malachi. It was from no lack of admonition that the Israelites had failed to keep the commandments of God, it was from no lack of warning that they hastened on to their punishment as a nation. The prophets' words had come to them almost as regularly and monotonously as the words of the guard stationed at the Fourteenth St. station in the New York Subway who calls out clearly and solemnly, "Watch the step, watch the step!" The course of the great underground railway here leaves a space between the station platform and the car entrance, and several thousand times a day the warning words are repeated in order to prevent accidents. "Watch your steps! Watch your steps!" called out Elijah and Elisha, Amos and Hosea, repeatedly and solemnly; "Walk in the way of the Lord, turn not aside from doing that which is right in the eyes of Jehovah." To Solomon at night had come Jehovah's promise and warning: If thou wilt walk before Me as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep My statutes and Mine ordinances; then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom, but if ye turn away, and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them." Solomon's successors had turned away after other gods: therefore God brought all this evil upon them.

How to Turn. That was a striking remark of Horace Greeley's in regard to the redemption of specie payment—The way to resume is to resume: so the way to turn is to turn; the way to reform is to reform.

Dr. Wilbur J. Chapman's illustration of conversion is this: When I first began to preach in the west, a little, old blind man always attended my services. He had a peculiar way of going around the town where he lived; he carried a little stick in his hand with which he struck the trees and fences, and always seemed to know just where he was. One day, I met him at the time I knew he must be going home, going exactly in the opposite direction. I asked where he was going and he told me he was going home. We had a heated argument as to which was right, for I had eyes and he had none, and so finally he said, "Set me right." I turned him squarely about and he found that every step was taking him nearer home. The difference between the man in the first instance and the man in the second was, the first time he had set his face away from home, the second time he was facing toward home.

"Turn ye," says God, "for why will ye die," and it is as if He takes us by the hand and turns us about, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This is conversion.

I am the Way. The needle of a compass was found perverted, turned the wrong way so that the arrow pointed to the south. What was the remedy? It was left in the company of a lodestone for twenty-four hours and thus it was con-verted, turned the right way so that the arrow pointed to the north. Companionship with Christ will turn the perverted heart in the right direction.

Is it too Late to turn? Can a man improve after forty? Professor Jowett was asked. His answer is enlightening. "I am long past forty, but I mean to improve myself pretty considerably, I can tell you."

Can a man turn completely around after forty, and break off from an evil past? "There is not a weed alive which will not, sooner or later, respond liberally to good cultivation," Luther Burbank declares. And what wonders he has accomplished with weeds and obnoxious plants! He can take an ill-scented weed that creeps along the ground and make it stand erect and become fragrant and beautiful. How much greater is a man than a weed! How much greater is the Divine Agent than the human agent!

II Stiffnecked

He that being often reproved hardeneth his Neck. We often read in the Scriptures of the hardening of the heart. Pharaoh hardened his heart; he was led by the plagues to relent and promise to let the Israelites leave his land, and then he conquered such feelings until he became past feeling. The Israelites hardened their hearts in the wilderness. When they turned aside quickly and made the molten calf, the words came to Moses: "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people." In the prayer that Moses offered for

SARGON II, CAPTOR OF SAMARIA

From Sargon's Palace at Khorsabad

them he said: "O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us; for it is a stiff-necked people and pardon our iniquity and our sin." Stephen in his defence called out to the Jews: "Ye stiff-necked, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye."

How many stiff necks, marble hearts like Hawthorne's Ethan Brand, there are to-day! There is a certain acid which when put into boiling water will cause solid ice to be formed in the pot on the fire. So, it has been said, there are hearts that remain cold in the glow of the love of Christ, they always resist the Spirit.

Petrifaction. The petrifying stream at Knaresborough is well known. It is a cascade from the river Nidd, about fifteen feet high and twice as broad, and forms an aqueous curtain to a cave. The dripping waters are used for petrifying anything that may be hung up in the drip of the water-ledge, which flows over, as it were, the eaves of the cave. This ledge of limestone rock is augmented unceasingly by the action of the water which flows over it. In the cascade a great variety of objects are hung up by short lengths of wire, and these are petrified, turned into rock, by the water trickling over them. Sponges, books, gloves, veils, animals, and birds subjected to the action of the shower are changed to stone. A sponge is petrified in a few months; some things require a year or two.

Petrifying streams threaten our spiritual life, and unless duly resisted steal away our vitality and leave us with the coldness and hardness of stone. Just as the Yorkshire stream slowly and silently converts what it laves into rock, so thorough the subtle action of sin the living saint may be imperceptibly changed into a fossil.

Let us set against daily peril, daily watchfulness, fellowship, and worship, and although steeped in a sea of petrifying influences we shall preserve that best of all treasures, the tenderness of the heart. Condensed from *Studies in Life*, by *W. L. Watkinson.*

Even Rocks do flow. Among the grants made by the Carnegie Institution in support of scientific investigations is one item bearing this strange title, "For investigating the flow of rocks." So, then, the solid rock can flow, and scientific men are interested in ascertaining the exact facts about its flowing, for thereby they learn something in regard to the shaping of the earth's crust under the force of gravity. They have a hydraulic machine capable of producing a pressure of one hundred and twenty tons to the square inch, and under such pressure marble, granite and other solid rocks actually exhibit the phenomenon of flow, although, needless to say, the rate of motion is exceedingly slow. If the solid rock is capable of flowing, can there be a heart so petrified that it may not yield to the pressure of God?

A New Heart will I give you. The late Honorary Secretary of the International Bible Reading Association told a story whose truth is vouchsafed for, of a prisoner who had been convicted of burglary five times and who gave the prison authorities much trouble. On one occasion the chaplain said to him: "I will tell you what is the matter with you—you want making new inside." The remark seemed to strike the prisoner as a good joke, and he answered, "Well, guv'nor, I think you're about right." The chaplain was rather surprised at this answer, and asked him if he knew how it could be done. "Not likely," he replied. The chaplain then read him that verse in Ezekiel 36: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh." Then he handed him his own Bible, and turning down the leaf at the third chapter of John's Gospel, left it with him to read for himself. Three days later he saw the man again and was struck with the change in his face and manner. "What is it?" he said. "What is it?" replied the man, "it's the Book!" There had come to him some recollections of what he had heard as a boy, and his hard heart was broken, and with prayers and tears he cried for mercy, and ultimately realized that he had found forgiveness.

III Suddenly Destroyed

The Lesson of the Fall of Samaria. The terrible upshot of all was "to

provoke the Lord to anger." The New Testament is as emphatic as the Old in asserting that there is a capacity of anger in God whose name is love, and that sin calls it forth. As in the first sin, so in all others, God has said, "Ye shall not do this thing," and we say, "Do it we will." What can the end of that be but the anger of the Lord? "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

The vision of the prophets was God's reply to Israel's rebellion, and was equally the sign of His anger and of His love. The more sin abounds, the more does God multiply means to draw back to Himself. The one desire of God's heart is that sinners will return from their evil ways.

But when that point of entire abandonment to sin, which Paul calls being "sold under sin," is reached, as it may be reached, at all events by a nation, and corruption has struck too deep to be cast out, once again the anger of the Lord is provoked; but this time it comes in a disguise. The armies of the Assyrians, not the prophets, are its messengers now. Israel had made itself like the nations whom God had used it to destroy, and now it shall be destroyed as they were.

To be swept out of His sight is the fate of obstinate rejection of His commandments and pleadings. Israel made itself the slave of evil and was made the captive of Assyria. Self-willed freedom, which does as it likes, and heeds not God, ends in bondage, and is itself bondage. God's anger against sin speaks pleadingly to us all, saying, "Do not this abominable thing that I hate." Well for us if we hearken to His voice when His anger is kindled but a little. If we do not yield to Him and cast away our idols we shall become vain as they.

These captives, dragging their weary limbs, with despair in their hearts, across the desert to a land of bondage, were but shadows, in the visible region of things, of the far more doleful and dreary fate that sooner or later must fall on those who would none of God's counsel, and despised all His reproof, but cling to their idol till they and it are destroyed together. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *The Second Book of Kings.*

Why they were Lost. A few years ago, on a keen, bitter winter's night, a vessel went down on our east coast, in sight of land, and scarcely a survivor was left to tell the tale. The reason assigned for the disaster was that in the wet, freezing night, the ropes had become rigid as bars of steel, and would not run through the blocks and pulleys, when an attempt was made to lower the boats. God's proccesses of salvation cannot work themselves out within us when every fibre of temper is rigid and all functions of the religious nature are choked with ice. We can only be saved by zealous and concentrated struggle. The Lord comes to preach and to justify hope to the children of men; but only to those in whom there is kindled fervor and consuming earnestness. *T. G. Selby,* in *The Strenuous Gospel.*

He that sinneth against God wrongeth his own Soul. This is physical law; witness the fact that criminals soon lose their beauty and comeliness. This is intellectual law; witness Byron, who has by license and profligacy clipped the wings of his imagination, dulled his intellect and brought decay upon his genius, until at thirty-five he confesses that his days are in the sear and yellow leaf, while all the flower and fruit of life are gone. This is moral law; sin cuts gashes into the spiritual nerve, until it shrivels and dies. In short, sin is a form of progressive suicide. Gluttony weakens the body, avarice warps the intellect, drunkenness ruins it, hate seams the brow, worry twists the features; and, when sin has completed its handiwork, man stands forth, not of divinity compact, but a mere lump of devil. Then when sin hath wrought havoc upon the individual, it goes on to injure society. *Newell Dwight Hillis,* in *Science and Men's Sinfulness.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Have a heart that never hardens. *Dickens.*

A golden age cannot be built out of brazen hearts. *Henry van Dyke.*

He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace. *Ruskin.*

"Consequences have no pity."

Who hath hardened himself against God and prospered? Job 9.4.
Sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death. James 1.15.
Sin, when it becomes fixed in the character, gives it a set so strong and hard that in time the character moves like an automatic slave, and the will, the intellect, and the body comes into perfect bondage. *William Laurance.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

John the Baptist took up the warning of the prophets and urged the people of his day to turn from their evil ways, to repent and to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. Beginning from the time of His baptism, Jesus the Christ said, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Have we disregarded His warning?

There were many causes which led to the fall of Samaria, but the sacred historian was right in ascribing the nation's ruin to the nation's sin. The people had forged their own chains, and they were taken away captive to Assyria. Sin binds its captives hand and foot. Know ye not, questions Paul, that his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? We know this—in general; do our lives prove that we know it in special?

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

We have reached the last stage in the history of the Northern Kingdom. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, invaded the land and exacted tribute of Hoshea, the last king. After a few years Hoshea refused to send the tribute required, and Shalmaneser learned that he was trying to secure the aid of So, the king of Egypt. Hoshea was imprisoned, Samaria was besieged for three years by the Assyrian forces, and then taken and the people were carried away captive to Assyria. Sargon II had meanwhile come to the throne of Assyria and he had the Israelites settled in Halah and on the Habor and in the cities of the Medes, and he sent people from Babylon and other eastern cities to take their place in Samaria. From these Assyrians and the Israelites left in the land (for not all were deported), the hated Samaritans descended about whom we hear in the Gospels.

It was the sin of Israel that led to her captivity, the sacred writer explains. The people had been ungrateful to Jehovah who had delivered them from bondage to the Pharaoh of Egypt, they had feared other gods and had followed the laws of heathen nations about them; they had tried to serve both Jehovah and false gods; they had offered sacrifices on high places throughout the land and had erected on high places and under green trees columns of stone and wooden pillars contrary to the law; they had burnt incense on the high places as did the heathen nations; and they had served idols, although Jehovah had said, "Ye shall not do this." All these things had aroused Jehovah's anger. Yet He had sent prophets and seers to warn them, to urge them to turn from their evil ways and keep His commandments. Notwithstanding all their pleading, the people would not hear, they hardened their hearts, rejected Jehovah's laws, sought to do as the nations around them did, made molten images, even two calves, and other idols, worshipped the stars, served Baal, practiced the most cruel heathen rites, used enchantments—in short, sold themselves to do that which was evil. The measure of their iniquity was full. Therefore they and theirs were taken away captive from the land of their inheritance.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Prophecy a living force to-day. 2. A corrupt nation deserves extinction. 3. The Assyrian Period.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Note-book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Israel write an account of Hoshea and the Downfall of Samaria. (Assign work for the Review.)

LESSON XIII—JUNE 25

REVIEW

Golden Text

What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6.8.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Kings 5.1-27. Elisha Healing Naaman, the Syrian; 2 Kings 6.8-23. Elisha's Heavenly Defenders. **T.** 2 Kings 11.1-20. Joash, the Boy-King, Crowned; 2 Kings 11.21; 12.16. Joash Repairs the Temple. **W.** Jonah 3.1; 4.11. God's Pity for the Heathen; 2 Chron. 26.1-23. Uzziah, King of Judah, Humbled. **T.** Isaiah 6.1-13. Isaiah's Vision and Call to Service; Isaiah 5.1-12. Song of the Vineyard. **F.** Micah 4.1-8. Micah's Picture of Universal Peace; Hos. 14.1-9. Israel's Penitence and God's Pardon. **S.** 2 Chron. 30.1-27. Hezekiah's Great Passover. **S.** 2 Kings 17.1-18. The Downfall of Samaria. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

A BRIEF REVIEW FROM THE TIME OF ELISHA TO THE FALL OF SAMARIA

Outlines for the Blackboard

I Counsels, 1-10.
Contempt, 11-12.
Cure, 13-14.

II Hindered, 8-12.
Hunted, 13-15.
Helped, 16-17.

III Elevated, 9-12.
Executed, 13-16.
Exulting, 17-20.

IV Failed, 4-8.
Fulfilled, 9-10.
Finished, 11-15.

V Penitence, 5-9.
Pardon, 10.
Passion, 1-11.

VI Possessions, 8-15.
Presumption, 16-18.
Punishment, 19-21.

VII Vision, 1-7.
Volunteer, 8.
Vocation, 9-13.

VIII Care, 1-2.
Consequence, 3-7.
Calamity, 8-12.

IX Prophecy, 1-2.
Peace, 3-8.
Prosperity, 6-8.

X Appeal, 1-3.
Answer, 4-8.
Admonition, 9.

XI Passover, 13-17, 21-22.
Prayer, 18-20.
Prolongation, 23-27.

XII Conspiracy, 1-4.
Catastrophe, 5-6.
Causes, 7-14.

Let twelve pupils prepare and recite a brief review of a different lesson. In small classes assign two or more lessons to each pupil. See the last quarterly review, p. 148. After each lesson is told, write its outline on the blackboard and question about it.

A REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

A Blackboard Review. Let the superintendent or leader call from twelve classes, appointed the week before, a sentence from each lesson that refers to the Golden Text for the Quarter—What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

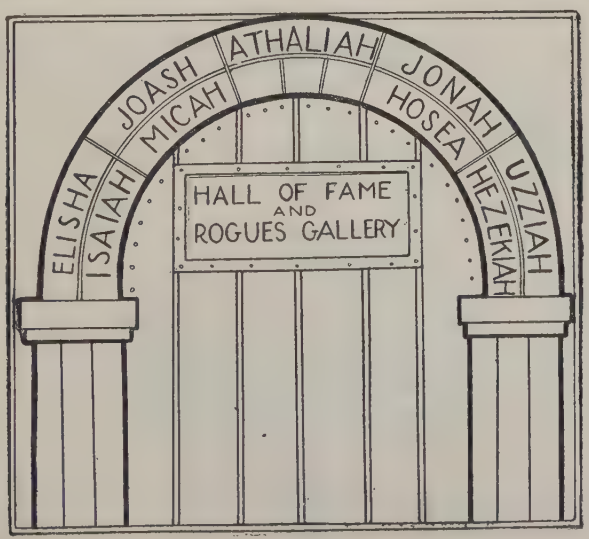
I. Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah.

II. Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them.
III. And Jehoiada made a covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people.
IV. They dealt faithfully.
V. Should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and also much cattle?
VI. He did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God.
VII. Woe is me! for I am undone.
VIII. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry.
IX. He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.
X. In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.
XI. The great Jehovah pardons every one that setteth his heart to seek God.
XII. The children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God.

	Chief Persons	Chief Facts
1.	Naaman, Jewish Maiden, King of Syria, King of Israel, Elisha, Servants.	A Great Cure.
2.	King of Syria, King of Israel, Elisha, Servant.	A Great Lesson.
3.	Jehoiada, Joash, Athaliah.	A Great Covenant.
4.	Jehoash, Priests, Jehoiada, People.	A Great Offering.
5.	Jonah, People of Nineveh, Jehovah.	A Great Compassion.
6.	Uzziah, Azariah.	A Great Sacrilege.
7.	Isaiah.	A Great Vision.
8.	Isaiah.	A Great Wrong.
9.	Micah.	A Great Peace.
10.	Hosea.	A Great Pardon.
11.	Hezekiah, People.	A Great Passover.
12.	Hoshea, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Children of Israel.	A Great Downfall.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

In the outline of this diagram written upon the blackboard write each name



as a five-minute talk is announced upon that character, from some one appointed a week ago.

A REVIEW FOR LITTLE FOLKS

Bring to class the Tarbell's Teachers' Guide pictures on the next page, copied upon cardboard large enough to be easily seen by all your class. Each square should be covered with its own piece of paper fastened by pin or thumb tack. Remove each paper as you question your pupils about the lesson that the picture recalls.

A REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

For what lesson of the Quarter would each of these verses be appropriate as Golden Texts?

We will not forsake the house of our God. Neh. 10.39.

Yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary. 2 Ch. 30.8.

I thy servant fear Jehovah from my youth. 1 K. 18.12.

I am Jehovah that healeth thee. Ex. 15.26.

The face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 1 Pet. 3.12.

The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him,
And delivereth them. Ps. 34.7.

Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Jehovah. Prov. 16.5.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace. Isa. 52.7.

The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Mt. 21.43.

Speak; for thy servant heareth. 1 Sam. 3.10.

Come, and let us return unto Jehovah. Hos. 6.1.

Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Jon. 4.2.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

Tell the lesson story suggested by the allusions in these sentences. (For a written review, write several copies of each sentence on separate slips of paper and let each of your pupils draw one. As soon as a pupil has answered one question, let him draw another. Announce next Sunday the one who has answered well the largest number.)

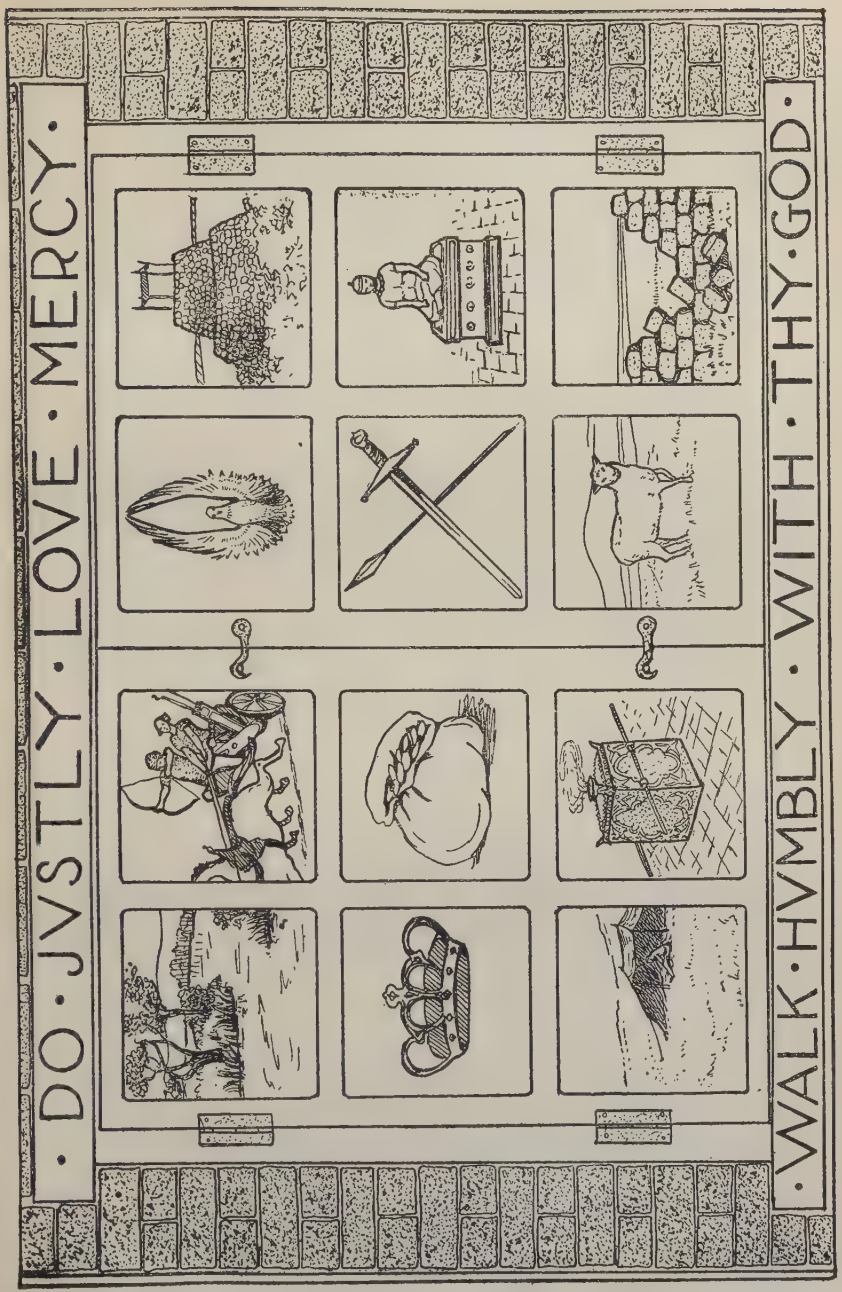
A Jonah's gourd
Up in one night and due to sudden sun. *Tennyson.*

Our cry is that there may be such entrances into our eye of the divine light as shall erase the mistiness of our vision and enable us to behold the presence and working of the celestial energies that are achieving the purposes of God. *Charles H. Parkhurst.*

This is the hand of the Lord; it is laid upon me in anger,
For I have followed too much the heart's desires and devices,
Worshipping Astaroth blindly, and impious idols of Baal.
This is the cross I must bear; the sin and the swift retribution. *Longfellow.*

Let none hear you idly saying
"There is nothing I can do,"
While the sons of men are dying,
And the Master calls for you.
Take the task He gives you gladly,
Let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly, when He calleth,
"Here am I, send me, send me." *Daniel March.*

Life's great things, like the Syrian lord,
Our hearts can do and dare,
But oh! we shrink from Jordan's side,
From waters which alone can save,
And murmur for Abana's banks,
And Pharpar's brighter wave. *Whittier.*


· DO · JVSTLY · LOVE · MERCY ·
· WALK · HVMBLY · WITH · THY · GOD ·

Put off, put off your mail, O kings!
And beat your brands to dust,
Your hands must learn a surer grasp,
Your hearts a better trust. *Ruskin.*

There are who like the Seer of old
Can see the helpers God has sent,
And how life's rugged mountain side
Is white with many an angel tent. *Whittier.*

QUESTIONS FOR A WRITTEN REVIEW

For Younger Pupils. Write these questions upon separate slips of paper. Let each pupil answer as many as he can in the time allotted.

1. Name two miracles that Elisha wrought.
2. Who was Naaman? How did he learn that he could be cured? What did the cure teach him?
3. What happened at Dothan, and what lesson has that record for us?
4. What good kings have we studied about this Quarter?
5. What evil kings?
6. When Isaiah received his call to service what made him exclaim that he was a man of unclean lips?
7. Who told the Parable of the Vineyard in this Quarter? What is it and what did it mean?
8. Repeat a verse from the Prophet Hosea.
9. A verse from the Prophet Micah.
10. A verse from the Prophet Isaiah.
11. Who was Hezekiah?
12. When was Samaria taken? By whom? What became of the people?
13. Name the Major Prophets.
14. Name the Minor Prophets.
15. What can you tell about the prophet Hosea?
16. What can you tell about the prophet Micah?
17. What can you tell about the prophet Jonah?
18. What can you tell about the prophet Isaiah?

For Older Pupils.

1. What is the date of the Fall of Samaria?
2. How long did the Northern Kingdom exist?
3. What were the causes of the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom from the standpoint of geography, history, and religion?
4. What two reigns were politically the most important?
5. What king of Judah was humbled?
6. What prophet was humbled?
7. Who had formed his own idea as to the way in which God must work and how did he learn differently?
8. What helpful truth did you learn from the record at Dothan?
9. What lesson teaches the essentials of worship, and what are they?
10. What lesson teaches that God judges the spirit of true worship?
11. What woes did Isaiah pronounce on Judah?
12. What was Micah's picture of peace?
13. Repeat the most beautiful verses in the Book of Hosea.
14. Repeat the most beautiful verses in the Book of Micah.
15. What is the value of the Book of Jonah?
16. What is known about the prophet Jonah and about the writer of the Book of Jonah?
17. When did the prophet Micah live?
18. What is the theme of his Book?
19. What is known about the prophet Hosea?
20. What was the purpose of his writing?

21. When did the prophet Isaiah live?
22. What can you tell about Isaiah?
23. What history is covered by the Second Book of Kings?
24. Name the Major Prophets.
25. Name the Minor Prophets. Why are they so called?

SUBJECTS FOR WRITTEN WORK TO BE BROUGHT TO CLASS

For Younger Pupils.

1. Tell the story of a captive maiden who helped her master.
2. The story of a temple chest.
3. The story of an angry prophet.
4. A story of a kindly deed of the Prophet Elisha.
5. The story of the crowning of a boy king.
6. The vision that made a prophet.

For Older Pupils.

1. Compare and contrast the two prophets Elijah and Elisha.
2. A comparison of Elisha and Joshua as successors of Elijah and Moses.
3. An account of events in Elisha's life from Gehazi's point of view.
4. The history of idolatry in the Northern Kingdom.
5. A connected history of the leading events in Israel from the reign of Ahab to the Fall of Samaria.
6. A connected history of the leading events in Judah from the reign of Joash to the reign of Hezekiah.
7. The Book of Isaiah.
8. The Book of Jonah.
9. The story of Jonah in four chapters: A Great Refusal; A Great Deliverance; A Great Repentance; A Great Lesson.
10. The Book of Micah.
11. How our School is interested in Home and Foreign Missionary Work.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What chapter in 2 Kings is just like this thirty-seventh chapter of Isaiah? (2 K. 19.) 2. Read the entire record in Kings (18 and 19), 2 Chronicles (32) and Isaiah (36 and 37). 3. What was Hezekiah's prayer? (Isa. 37.14-20.) 4. What preparations had Hezekiah made to withstand an attack? (2 Ch. 32.2-8.) 5. What words in Sennacherib's letter were a defiance of God? (Isa. 37.10-13.) 6. How were sieges conducted by the Assyrians? (Clipping, p. 264.) 7. How was Sennacherib's army destroyed? (Clipping, p. 266.) 8. What can you learn about Nineveh? 9. About Sennacherib's own account of this history? (Clipping, p. 266.)

Questions to think about. 1. What king of Syria had made a vain boast about what he would do to Samaria? (Lesson 12 of First Quarter.) 2. What is the meaning of the figures of speech in v. 25? (Clipping, p. 264.) 3. In v. 27? (Clipping, 9. 263.) 4. In v. 28? (Clipping, p. 263.) 5. Were hook and bridle ever attached to a man's lips? (Clipping, p. 265.) 6. What is the meaning of v. 31? 7. Did grass actually grow on the housetops in Jerusalem? (Clipping, p. 265.) 8. What did you learn about Nineveh in an earlier lesson? (Lesson V of this Quarter.)

Note-book and Memory Work. Commit to memory Byron's poem "The Destruction of Sennacherib," or Luther's prayer based upon the forty-sixth Psalm, A strong fortress is our God.

In your Book of the Kings of Israel draw a map containing Palestine and Assyria and trace the route from Samaria to Babylon. Below the map write an account of the Downfall of Samaria.

THIRD QUARTER

LESSON I—JULY 2

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY CONCERNING SENNACHERIB

Golden Text

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Ps. 46.1.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Isaiah 37.14-38; 2 Kings 19.20-37; 2 Chron. 32.20-23. Isaiah's Prophecy concerning Sennacherib. **T.** 2 Chron. 32. 1-8. "With us is the Lord our God to Help us." **W.** 2 Chron. 32.9-19. The Defiance of Sennacherib. **T.** Isaiah 36.1-20. Boastful Speech of the Rabshakeh. **F.** Isaiah 37.1-7. Hezekiah Interceding with God. **S.** Isaiah 37.8-13. Final Warning of the Rabshakeh. **S.** Isaiah 38.1-22. God Hears Hezekiah's Prayer. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Isa. 37.14-38 PRINT vv. 21-36 COMMIT vv. 33-35

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23 Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel. 24 By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into its farthest height, the forest of its fruitful field; 25 I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.

26 Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass, that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. 27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as a field *of grain* before it is grown up. 28 But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. 29 Because of thy raging against me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

30 And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36 And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

21-37. Read 2 Ch. 32, 2 K. 18 and 19, and Isa. 36 and 37.

21. *Thou has prayed to me.* See verses 14-20.

22. *The virgin daughter of Zion.* The city is often personified in the Scriptures as a woman.—*Hath shaken her head.* "With contented and enhanced self-consciousness she shakes her head after him as he departs in disgrace and shame; and, moving it backwards and forwards, says by the gesture that it must be so and could not be otherwise, Jer. 18.16; Lam. 2.15, (*Delitzsch*).—*At thee.* Heb. *after thee,* RVm.

23. *Whom hast thou defied, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice?* Rhetorical questions.—*Defied.* See verse 4.—*Lifted up thine eyes on high.* Haughtily: see 2.11.

24. Sennacherib's boast: compare Ben-hadad's boast, 1 K. 20.10.—*With the multitude of my chariots.* See p. 264.—*I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof.* "This is to be taken symbolically. Tall cedars and choice fir-trees are 'kings, princes, nobles, all that is highest and most stately'" (*Cheyne*). See p. 266.—*I will enter into the farthest height.* "Jerusalem with its Lebanon-houses, the temple and the palace" (*Cheyne*).—*The forest of its fruitful field.* "The prophet combines two, strictly speaking, inconsistent expressions, to convey an idea of the strength and beauty of Jerusalem" (*Cheyne*).

25. *I have digged and drunk water.* He boasts that he can supply his own water by digging new wells; the stopping up of the old wells (see 2 Ch. 32.2-4) cannot hinder his advance.—*With the sole of my feet.* He boasts that after conquering Judah he will march on to the conquest of Egypt.—*Will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.* "The four-armed Nile is to him as a mere puddle, which he tramples out with his foot" (*Delitzsch*). The conquest of Egypt was his aim.

26-28. Jehovah's response to Sennacherib, for Hezekiah's encouragement.

26. *Hast thou not heard?* Rhetorical question: compare 40.21.—*How I have done it long ago.* All events are of His ruling: compare Acts 2.23.—*Now have I brought it to pass.* I have purposed, I will also do it, 46.11.—*That it should be thine to lay waste.* You are only my agents.

27. *As the grass...grown up.* "The point of comparison in the four images is the easiness of the conquest: before Assyria the nations became like weak, delicate, superficially-rooted grasses, and a corn-field not yet grown to stalk, which can be easily pulled up and does not need the sickle" (*Delitzsch*). Compare Ps. 129.6-8.—*A field of grain before it is grown up.* Grain blasted, 2 K. 19.26.

28. *Sitting down, going out, coming in, raging against me.* Compare Ps. 139.2; 121.8. By these phrases are meant all Sennacherib's doings and thoughts.

29. *Thine arrogancy.* Or, *thy careless ease,* RVm.—*My hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy lips.* Compare Ezek. 29.4; 38.4, and see p. 265. *I will turn thee back.* See verses 7 and 34.

30. The prophet now turns to Hezekiah.—*The sign.* Of the fulfillment of the preceding prophecy. Compare the signs of Ex. 3.12.—*This year.* The year of the invasion.—*That which groweth itself.* The grain that had sprung up from the kernels that chanced to fall in the preceding harvest. Compare the law in Lev. 25.5.—*In the second year...in the third year.* "During this year it has been impossible, with the Assyrians in the land, to sow the seed, and the Jews have been dependent on the precarious crop of what had fallen from the harvest of the previous year and sown itself. Next year, it being now too late to sow for next year's harvest, they must be content with the wild corn, that which springs of itself, but the third year they could sow. Perhaps we ought not to interpret these numbers literally. The use of *three* gives the statement a formal and general aspect, as if the prophet only meant, It may be not quite at once that we get rid of the Assyrians; but when they do go, then they go for good, and you may till your land without fear of their return" (*George Adam Smith*).

31. *The remnant —that is escaped of the house of Judah.* Heb. *the escaped of the house of Judah that remain,* RVm. Many cities had been captured and

the population of Judah greatly diminished.—*Take root downward.* See Isa. 27.6.—Grow in strength.—*Bear fruit upward.* Increase in numbers.

32. *Out of Jerusalem.* "The country folk that had been driven into the capital by the invasion would again return to their homes" (*Dummelow*).

33. *Cast up a mound.* Preparatory to a siege. See p. 265.

34. See verses 7 and 29. "Never had a prophet predicted more boldly, never was a prediction more brilliantly fulfilled" (*Driver*).

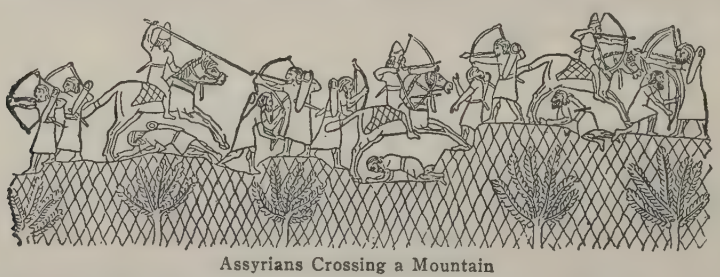
35. *For mine own sake.* See Hezekiah's words in his prayer, Save us that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art Jehovah, even Thou only, v. 20.—*And for my servant David's sake.* "On one hand it is Jehovah's glory and fidelity according to which Jerusalem is saved; on the other hand, David's merit, or, what is the same, Jehovah's love for him, which secures Jerusalem's good" (*Delitzsch*).

36. *The angel of Jehovah.* "The narrative does not say (here, but see Isa. 30.30-31) what secondary means, if any, were used. But it should be observed that it does not exclude the use of secondary means. A modern historian would dwell on the details of the pestilence: to Isaiah, who had learned to see in the winds the messengers of God (Ps. 104.4) it was nothing else than the angel of Jehovah" (*Expository Times*). "Compare Ex. 12.23. In *2* S. 24.15-16 the pestilence that punished David's numbering of the people is attributed to an angel; and it is probable that it was a similar calamity that destroyed Sennacherib's army. It seems more likely that the disaster occurred in the low-lying ground on the Egyptian frontiers than in the neighborhood of Jerusalem; and the Greek historian, Herodotus, who gives a fanciful account of an overthrow sustained by the Assyrians in a campaign against Egypt, places it near Pelusium. But wherever and however it happened, it was a signal confirmation of Isaiah's faith in the Lord and a striking vindication of his prescience" (*Dummelow*).

38. Sennacherib died in 681 B. C.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

24. *With the mutltitude of my cha-iots am I come up to the height of the mountains.* I, the great, the all-powerful king, have performed this seemingly impossible feat. The Assyrian inscriptions present several parallels to this boastful language. Thus Shalmaneser says, "Trackless paths and difficult mountains, which, like the point of an iron sword, stood pointed to the sky,



Assyrians Crossing a Mountain

on wheels of iron and bronze I penetrated." Clearly these boasts of Sennacherib are not to be taken literally. He was indeed no stranger to mountain-passes, but it would seem that the route of the Assyrian armies as far as Aradus (the most northern Phœnician town) was by the shore—the route of the present day. The boast is to be explained on the analogy of the phrase "to ride upon the high places of the land, *i. e.* to conquer and rule over it." Lebanon, as the northern bulwark of the land of Israel, is used as a representative or symbol for the whole country (compare Zech. 11.1). This application of the word accounts for the following futures, "I will cut down...I will enter...which mean that the conquest of Palestine had still to be completed. *T. K. Cheyne,* in *The Prophecies of Isaiah.*

32. Here we have three operations of an ancient siege very accurately por-

trayed. The Nineveh sculptures depicting the siege of Lachish, exactly explain the method of assault. The final means of capture was the mound raised against the wall of the beleaguered places. For the erection of this the archers were indispensable. While the slaves and laborers of the army were heaping materials for the mound, the archers were continuously employed in shooting at every defender who appeared on the ramparts, galling them with their arrows, and thus protecting their workmen or drawing off the attention of the enemy. The archers, as we see from the Assyrian sculptures, were protected by the shield men. The shield was a strong, wooden, oblong frame as high as a man, covered with leather, resting on the ground, and held by its bearer in front of the archer, who under its protection was not only safe, but was able to take deliberate aim. The mound was made of any materials that came to hand, with a gradual slope upwards till it almost reached the wall and was not much inferior to it in height. When completed, battering rams were plied from it against the upper part of the wall and the battlements, until a breach was effected. *H. B. Tristram,* in *Eastern Customs.*

36. *The angel of Jehovah smote a hundred and fourscore and five thousand.*

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea
Where the blue waves roll nightly on deep Galilee.
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green
That host with their banners at sunset were seen.
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strewn.
For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed.
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances uplifted, the trumpet unblown,
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord. *Byron.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

27. *As the grass on the housetops.* The flat roofs of the houses are covered with earth or gravel, rolled hard, and this covering is often re-rolled after a rain to prevent leaking. Grass easily grows upon such roofs, but because its roots can not sink deep into the soil it dries up quickly, or it is destroyed by the trampling of feet or the use of the roller.

28. *I will put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy lips.* In the bas-reliefs taken from Khorsabad there are representations of prisoners brought before the king, each prisoner having an iron ring through his lower lip. To these rings, cords or ropes, "the bridle," are attached, which the king holds in his left hand, while with the right he is thrusting a spear into their eyes. The hook in the nose is not so frequently represented. See the large picture facing Lesson III and the description on page 284.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Sargon, the Assyrian king who captured Samaria and carried Israel into captivity, was succeeded by Sennacherib who reigned from 705 to 681 B. C. Merodach-baladan again proclaimed himself king of Babylonia—the one who sent an embassy with presents to Hezekiah during his sickness, 2 K. 20.12-19, presumably for the purpose of inciting him also to rebel against Sennacherib—and was defeated by Sennacherib.

Meanwhile Hezekiah had defeated the Philistines (2 K. 18.8), had prepared Jerusalem to withstand a siege by having a conduit for water built (2 K. 20.20), and, contrary to Isaiah's counsels, had sent gifts to Egypt to gain her promise of aid in a revolt from Assyrian control. Chapters 28-31 of Isaiah give the

prophet's rousing sermons delivered at this time: his words of warning against trusting in Egypt, whose weakness he well perceived; his assurance of the futility of revolt against Assyria, whose strength he likewise saw; and his counsels to trust in Jehovah, who alone could deliver them. His "precept upon precept" fell on dull ears, and he declared that "by men of strange lips and with another tongue" they should be made to hear.

Sennacherib on His Throne

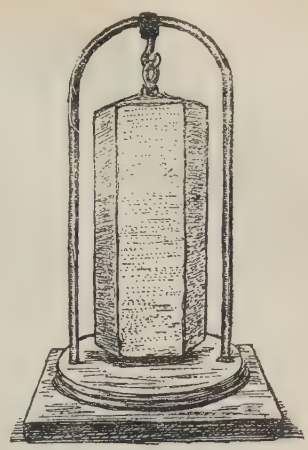
In 701 B. C. Sennacherib's army moved westward against the rebels along the Mediterranean shore. He conquered the Phœnician towns one after another, save Tyre, met and defeated at Eltekeh the Egyptians who had come to the aid of the Palestinian states (or, as some think, Arab tribes from Asiatic Egypt) and then captured all the fortified cities except Jerusalem, 2 K. 18.13-16. Hezekiah yielded and sent this message to Sennacherib at Lachish: I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

Having received Hezekiah's tribute, Sennacherib sent by his officers an insolent demand for the surrender of Jerusalem. Hezekiah in his dismay turned to Isaiah for counsel; Isaiah inspired him to defy the enemy by foretelling Sennacherib's retreat. News of a revolt in Babylon did hastily summon Sennacherib home.

Lachish was a city southwest of Jerusalem on the way to Egypt. An interesting confirmation of Sennacherib's attack here is furnished by a sculptured slab discovered by Layard on the walls of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. There is this inscription over the king's head: Sennacherib, king of nations, king of Assyria, sitting on the throne, causes the spoils of the city of Lachish to pass before him.

Sennacherib's own account of his invasion of Judah is given on the six-sided terra-cotta cylinder found in 1830 at Nineveh and now in the British Museum. It is often called "The Taylor Cylinder" because it was formerly owned by Mr. Taylor. The words are as follows (Dr. Ball's translation, in Light from the East): But as for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, together with numberless fortresses and small towns in their neighborhood, I invested and took by means of the battering of rams and the assault of scaling-ladders (or siege towers), the attack of the foot-soldiers, mines, bills, and axes. I brought out from the midst of them, and counted as spoil 200,150 persons, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without number. As for himself, I shut him up like a bird in a cage in his royal city of Jerusalem. I built a line of forts about him, and whoever came forth from the gate of his city, I punished. His cities which I had plundered I severed from his territory, and gave them to Mitinti king of Ashod, Padi king of Ekron, and Zil-baal king of Gaza; and so I diminished his territory.

To their former annual tribute I added an impost of presents to my lordship, and laid it upon them. Him, Hezekiah, the fear of my august Lordship cast down; and the Arabians and his trusty warriors whom he had brought in for the defence of Jerusalem his royal city fell away. Along with thirty talents of gold (2 K. 18.13-16) (and) eight hundred talents of silver, he caused to be brought after me precious stones, carbuncles, kassu stones, great pieces of lapis, ivory beds, ivory thrones, elephant hides (and) tusks, ushu wood, box-wood, all sorts of things, a huge treasure, and his own daughters, the women-folk of his palace, men-singers, women-singers, to Nineveh the city of my Lordship; and he despatched his envoy to pay the tribute and do homage."



Taylor Cylinder

A remnant of Judah survived this first invasion of Sennacherib and Hezekiah retained his kingship only as a vassal of Assyria. Then in 690 B. C., the date given by Herodotus and by the monuments, Sennacherib again moved westward with his army determined to take Jerusalem and then proceed to conquer Egypt. (Another theory held by many scholars is that there was but one invasion of Judah and that the events recorded in 2 K. 18 and 19, and the parallel account in Isaiah 36 and 37, occurred in 701 B. C.) Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah, telling him that his trust in Jehovah would not save him. Hezekiah entered the temple and prayed for Jehovah's aid. The answer to that prayer through Isaiah is our lesson to-day.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

The Northern Kingdom has come to an end. During the rest of the year we study the fortunes of the Southern Kingdom. It is possible for you to make your pupils as interested in Judah's struggles and difficulties and faults and virtues, and as eager to learn how it will all end, as they are in the fortunes of the hero of a delightsome story book. And as you develop the story you can implant in your pupils' minds a firm faith in God as the one who directs all things.

Study the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of Isaiah, and the parallel accounts, till you can give a simple but realistic account of the situation in Jerusalem, the defiant speeches of Sennacherib's officer, King Hezekiah's alarm, his message to Isaiah and Isaiah's answer, then the boastful letter of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's prayer and the answer through Isaiah, the destruction of the enemy's army, the danger past.

Impress the thought of Dr. Hall, p. 268, and illustrate God's care by the Scotch laddie's experience, p. 269.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. What day is next Tuesday? Why do we celebrate it? What was the Declaration of Independence? It is fitting that to-day when our thoughts are full of our plans for keeping our national holiday, we should turn to the little Kingdom of Judah and see what cause she had for rejoicing over the wonderful way in which her independence was gained.

For Older Pupils. You recall the flight of Napoleon from Russia, which only twenty thousand out of the five hundred thousand in his army survived. On the anniversary of that day in the churches of Moscow is read the exultation over the fall of Sennacherib when his great army perished.

What caused Napoleon's flight and the destruction of the French? What caused the flight of Sennacherib and the destruction of the Assyrians? The hand of God is seen in both. Our lesson is of thrilling interest: to under-

stand it we must get our historical bearings. Let us first turn to the Assyrian Empire and see what took place there after Sargon carried away captive the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. See the Historical Background.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Where to carry Trouble

Hezekiah's Experience. "Behold, thou has heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?" These were the words of Sennacherib's letter. Well did Hezekiah know his enemy's power. He was in desperate straits, but, as Matthew Henry says of David, when he was at his wit's end he was not at his faith's end. He took that letter into the temple and "spread it before Jehovah." "Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear;" so the great king prayed. "Hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land. O Jehovah, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even Thou only."

The answer came through the prophet Isaiah. "The king of Assyria shall not come unto this city, for I will defend this city and save it." What was the result? "The angel of Jehovah smote the camp of the Assyrians, so Sennacherib departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh."

Bring Your Difficulties to God in Prayer. The distinguished German philosopher, Fichte, once discussed prayer with Baron von Kottwitz. The child must pray, declared Fichte, but he, a grown man, saw no need of it for himself, his part was to will and to do. "Do you not agree with me?" he questioned, and the Baron answered simply. "When I awake in the morning," he said, "and think of all the duties that I must fulfill during the day, and then think how weak I am, and how often I fail in patience and love and wisdom, I can not do otherwise, I must ask my Heavenly Father to help me! And when at night I lie down to sleep and think of all that I have failed to do or have done wrongly, then I cannot sleep peacefully until I have asked my Heavenly Father to forgive me." "I wish I felt as you do," Fichte answered.

Not long afterwards the philosopher died, and when his will was read it was learned that he had made Baron von Kottwitz the guardian of his only child. Fichte had never seen the Baron save on this one occasion, but so great was the impression made on him by this interview that he could think of no one to whom he would rather entrust his son than the man who lived in such close communion with God whom he himself had not learned to love.

The great heroes of the Bible have all lived in close communion with God, and to Him they have brought their joys and sorrows. Jesus Himself lived a life of prayer. Whether alone on the mountain side or in the midst of the curious throng at Lazarus' grave, He lifted His heart in prayer to the Father, and was strengthened for the task or the torture before Him.

The Trouble Clerk. There is some one in telephone offices, or on call there, who is officially termed the Trouble Clerk. If your 'phone doesn't work, or the lines get crossed, you will probably make her acquaintance. You ask Central what to do, and this clerk is called up, and when you have talked it over, a man is sent out to help you. It is a fine thing to know what to do when one gets into trouble. Just go to headquarters. There is One who will make it His business to help you—He promises it. *Wellspring.*

Christ, the Child-Helper. Christ loves to have you ask Him to help you in everything, and you really do need His help in everything. There is nothing which makes it impossible for you to bring your lives, your hopes, your cares to Him. He cares about all these things. They are not small things to Him. You know not only that your mother cares, but how she cares, for all that happens to you. If you have a terrible headache and cannot do your work in school, and come home weary and discouraged, you know who can help to set things right as no one else can. Oh! your mother is very pitiful!

And Christ has said: "As one whom a mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And there is nothing which troubles you, or interests you, that you cannot bring to Him. If you feel sick, if your studies trouble you, if you seem to find it hard to make any believe that you are trying to do right, if you find strange feelings of sadness sweeping over your soul, you can just go to Him, praying, "Lord, help me." *C. C. Hall,* in *The Silver Cup.*

II God is our Strength

The Forty-sixth Psalm and Luther's Hymn. This Psalm commemorates some great deliverance, what one we cannot be certain, but many believe that it commemorates the time when the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold. Dr. Hugh Macmillan says: "The Psalmist tells the Jews, when they hear about the destruction of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, not to be carried away by the mere wonder and excitement of the miracle, but to be still in their souls that they may reflect upon and understand the meaning and purposes of this divine deliverance." Our Golden Text is the first verse of this Psalm: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

In 1656 Oliver Cromwell said in Parliament: "If you set your hearts to it (to make God's will done on earth and first of all in England) then you will sing Luther's Psalm (46). That is a rare Psalm for a Christian! and if he set his heart open, and can approve it to God, we shall hear him say, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...If Pope and Spaniard, and Devil and all, set themselves against us, yet in the name of the Lord we should destroy them! The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge.

In moments when Martin Luther was in despair he would say to his friend Melancthon, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm," and they would sing his hymn based on this Psalm: Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott. Here is Carlyle's translation of two of the stanzas:

A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He'll help us clear from all the ill
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The ancient Prince of Hell
Hath risen with purpose fell!
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour,
On earth is not his fellow.

With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon we were down-ridden;
But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God Himself hath bidden.
Ask ye, Who is the same?
Christ Jesus is His name,
The Lord Zebaoth's Son,
He and no other one
Shall conquer in the battle.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren brings the Psalm home to us in these words: The Psalmist is generalizing the historical fact of the sudden and utter destruction of Sennacherib's host into a universal law. And it is a universal law—true for all generations. Martin Luther might well make this Psalm the battle-cry of the Reformation, and we may well make our own the rugged music and dauntless tone of his rendering of these words.

I am with thee. I remember one Saturday night it was nearly midnight when I started to tramp six or seven miles down through the lonely glen to get home. The road had a bad name. This particular night was very black, and two miles outside our little village the road gets blacker than ever. I was just entering the dark defile, when about one hundred yards ahead, in the densest of the darkness, there suddenly rang out a great, strong, cheery voice: "Is that you, Johnny?" It was my father—the bravest, strongest man I ever knew. Many a time since, when things have been getting black and gloomy about me. I have heard a voice greater than any earthly parent cry: "Fear not; for I am with thee." And lo! God's foot is rising and falling on the road before us as we tread the journey of life. Don't let us forget that. *John McNeill.*

God is Faithful. From the bottom of the coal-mine nearly a third of a mile deep, the whole weight of six tons, including coals and car, suddenly begins to shoot upward with such speed that it has reached the top and an empty car has descended in about a minute and a quarter. The motive power

is the Belgian engine, and the presiding figure is the engineer. As well as cars of coal, precious human lives go up and down, and every miner's life depends on him. What is the steadying thought for these miners as they plunge into the darkness? It is that the engineer is faithful. Faithful! that means one who answers to trust, one who is true.

There are many dark things about life like the going down into the darkness of the mine—burdens, losses, anxieties, deaths, our own death. All in obedience to the laws of Nature, men say. But who presides over these laws? What of Him? is the heart's cry. And the Scripture answer is, "God is faithful, He is true to trust."

He is true to trust whether we are conscious of the fact or not. But if we are conscious of it, there is great comfort for troubled souls in the fact. He will overrule mistakes. He will give strength amid discouragements. In the midst of trial He is present to prevent the weight overwhelming us. When assurance fails He leads to the promise of assurance, and gives us a firm grip of His own sure word. *Wayland Hoyt,* in *Expository Times.*

III I Brought it to Pass

Sennacherib's Will and God's. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, God speaks to the proud king of Assyria and says: Now have I brought it to pass that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities unto ruinous heaps. In the words of Hegel, man executes what he thinks is his own will, and knows not that he is but fulfilling God's intent. The arrogant king of the great Assyrian Empire boasted of the many cities he had laid waste—he did not know that he was only fulfilling God's intent that by his hand they should be made ruinous heaps! He wrote to the king of little Judah, Let not thy God in whom thou trusteth deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given unto the hand of the king of Assyria—but God decreed that he should return to Nineveh without accomplishing his purpose, and He brought it to pass.

The Real Guide. You have seen a small lad happy in the belief that he is driving a horse; the reins are in his little hands, but over his hands is the strong grasp of the lad's father, and the father's hands are the guiding and controlling power. So God deals with the great men who seemingly control history; the real Guide is their heavenly Father.

What we need. What we need is a profound faith in God's ruling all things, said General Gordon. John Wesley had that faith when he said, I read my newspaper in order to see how God governs the world.

Cromwell had that faith. What are all our histories, he asked, but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken and tumbled down and trampled upon every thing that He had not planted?

Lincoln had that faith. No human council hath devised nor hath any human mind worked out these great things, he declared. They are the gracious gifts of the most high God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. And again he said: Now at the end of three years' struggle the nation's condition is not what either party or any man desired or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Is that faith ours? Can we say with Dr. Lyman Abbott: I no longer look back for the evidence that God was in history—though I believe that He was in history—but I look about me to see Him in history now.

SENTENCE SERMONS

Daily prayers help to lessen daily cares. *Spurgeon.*

There's no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven. *Faber.*

Behind the dim unknown,
Stands God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own. *Lowell.*

And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Ps. 50.15.

Man proposes, but God disposes. *Russian Ambassador to Napoleon.*

Trouble and perplexity drive me to prayer, and prayer drives away trouble and perplexity. *Melanchthon.*

The dice of God are always loaded. *Emerson.*

The Assyrian and Babylonian oppressors have passed away, but the words which comforted and guided the captive Israelites are gaining ever new power to speak, not to a small class only, but to the heart of mankind. *W. G. Jordan.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

We should see God's hand in whatever befalls.

As Dr. Maclaren well says, If a letter is not grave enough to be spread before Him, it is too small to annoy us.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The answer to Hezekiah's Prayer through Isaiah.
1. Sennacherib's Arrogance, 21-25. 2. Sennacherib the Agent of God, 26-27. 3. Sennacherib's Approaching Humiliation, 28-29. 4. Hezekiah Re-assured, 30-35.
II. The fate of Sennacherib and his army, 36-38.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was in the neighborhood of Judah with a vast army. He sent a letter to Hezekiah, king of Judah, in which he boasted that he should take Jerusalem. Hezekiah besought God's help, and through a message from Isaiah the prophet came the answer.

Sennacherib should beat an ignominious retreat leaving Jerusalem uncaptured. In his arrogance he had defied God, the Holy one of Israel. He had boasted of the ease with which he would surmount all obstacles in accomplishing his purpose of taking Jerusalem and conquering Egypt. In what he had already accomplished he had been but the tool of God, for it had been the divine will that the cities he had captured should be laid waste and therefore they had been unable to resist him. But his doings were under God's oversight, who would permit him to go no farther, and would drag him back.

Hezekiah's special message was this. It might be some time before they could sow and reap, but that time would surely come, and those that had escaped would prosper. And as for the king of Assyria, he shall not attack nor besiege Jerusalem, he shall return the way he came, for God would defend the city for His own sake and for David's sake.

The fulfillment of the prophecy came. In a single night a hundred and eighty-five thousand of Sennacherib's army lay dead, for God had smitten them. So Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, and later he was slain in the temple. Another son, Esar-haddon, reigned in his stead.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION AND WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

1. God in great movements. 2. The Book of Isaiah. See page 29 of this book.

Questions to look up. 1. Tell the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. (Acts 8.26-39.) 2. Turn to Matthew, and see how many times it is said that Christ fulfilled scriptures. 3. What did Jesus Himself say in Lk. 24.25-27 in regard to His fulfillment of the words of the prophets? 4. Look up the nine occasions when words from this chapter are cited in Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Galatians and 1 Peter. 5. What words in the Gospel of John show how His contemporaries treated the Messiah? (Jn. 1.10-11; 8.48; 9.24; 10.20.) 6. What can you tell about Isaiah as a prophet and teacher? (Clipping, p. 29.) 7. As a poet and orator? (Clipping, p. 30.) 8. What is the period covered by the Book of Isaiah? (Clipping, p. 30.)

Questions to think about. Tell how each part of the prophecy in regard to the Servant of Jehovah's sufferings, death, and exaltation was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, giving the New Testament scripture in regard to it.

Memory and Note-Book Work. Commit the lesson to memory; it is one of the greatest chapters in the Old Testament. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of Hezekiah and Sennacherib.

LESSON II—JULY 9

THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF JEHOVAH

Golden Text

The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa. 53.6.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Isaiah 52.13; 53.12. The Suffering Servant of Jehovah." **T.** Isaiah 42.1-9. "A Bruised Reed will he not Break." **W.** Isaiah 49.1-13. "They shall not Hunger nor Thirst." **T.** Isaiah 50.4-11. "I Hid not my Face from Shame." **F.** Matt. 12.15-21. "A Bruised Reed shall he not Break." **S.** John 6.22-35. "He that Cometh unto me shall never hunger." **S.** Matt. 26.36-46. The Servant Drinking the Father's Cup. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Isa. 52.13-53.12 COMMIT Isa. 53.4-6

13 Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. 14 Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

1 Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hid their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke *was due?* 9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

13-15. Jehovah is represented as the Speaker, explaining and vindicating the Suffering Servant. In 11-12 He again speaks. See The Lesson Briefly Told.

SENNACHERIB

From a restoration of a statue found in the ruins of his Palace. Now in the British Museum

13. *My servant.* "The Hebrew word for servant means a person at the disposal of another—to carry out his will, do his work, represent his interests." Incidental allusions to "the servant of Jehovah" are scattered throughout the second part of the Book of Isaiah, but the main passages are these: 41.8-20; 42.1-7,18-25; 43.5-10; 49.1-9; 50.4-10; 52.13-53.12. Who is meant by the term? Tons of printed matter have discussed the problem. What was the conception in the mind of the writer? Was the servant a personification or a person? If a personification, was he the Israelitish nation as a whole, or the best portion of that nation—the righteous nucleus? The exiles in Babylon or that part which remained loyal to the Lord throughout all the trials of the exile and thus kept alive the true religion? If a person, was he ideal or real? The prophet Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Hezekiah, or Jehoiachin? Or was he one still to come, the promised Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth? Each of these interpretations are ably defended. From a chapter in Dr. George Adam Smith's Book of Isaiah I condense these statements: God set apart for His chief service upon earth, not an individual nor a group of individuals, but a whole nation in its national capacity. We have heard the whole nation plainly called, by Jeremiah (30.10) and Ezekiel (37.25) the servant of Jehovah. It is in this sense that Isaiah first uses the title in 41.8; 44.1; 48.20. Very soon the prophet sketches the servant as something less than the actual nation. A certain ideal of the people fills his mind's eye—the better portion of Israel. By Chap. 49 the servant of Jehovah is a personification of the true effective Israel as distinguished from the mass of the nation—a Personification, but not yet a Person. In chapter 50 it has become more difficult to distinguish the Servant from an actual Person. In 52.13-53 there are very strong reasons, both in the text itself and in the analogy of other prophecy, to suppose that the portrait of an Individual is intended. None but prejudiced Jews have ever denied that this great prophecy, known as the fifty-third of Isaiah, was fulfilled in One Person, Jesus of Nazareth, and achieved in all its details by Him alone.—*Deal wisely.* Or, *prosper,* RVm. "The verb really means deal wisely in such a way as to prosper. The sufferings of the Servant are sure to succeed: they will not be thrown away" (*Cheyne*).—*Exalted and lifted up.* See Isa. 57.15.

14. *Many were astonished at thee.* The words in parentheses explain why: they could not understand his suffering, which was considered a punishment for sin.—*Marred.* By disease. The words here are vague; they seem to represent a leper, possibly because leprosy was one of the worst and most common misfortunes of the East.—*More than any...of men.* Or, *from that of man, and his form from that of the sons of men,* RVm.

15. *So.* The complement of *as* in the last verse.—*Sprinkle.* Instead of being himself shunned as "unclean," he will make others clean, as in Num. 19.18-21. The alternative reading given in the margin is *startle;* many nations shall be surprised.—*Shut their mouths.* Either in astonishment, as in Job 21.5, or with respect, as in Job 29.9-10.—*At him.* Or, *because of him,* RVm.—*That which had not been told them.* The reference is to the exaltation of the servant. Quoted in Rom. 15.21.—*Understand.* Or, *consider,* RVm. "This was fulfilled in the effect upon the world of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ following upon His passion" (*Dummelow*).

1-8. Israel is the speaker. "The words are the answer of conscience to God" (*Smith*). "Whenever a 'we' is suddenly introduced into a prophecy, it is always Isaiah that speaks, since the prophet takes the nation along with himself" (*Delitzsch*).

1. Quoted in Jn. 12.38; Rom. 10.16.—*Who hath believed.* "The tenses in vv. 1-3 are past (prophetic perfect), the future being viewed as already accomplished. The implied answer to the question is 'No one'" (*Dummelow*).—*Our message.* Or, *that which we have heard,* RVm. The prophesies of Isa. 49.1-6; 50.4-9; 52.13-15.—*The arm of Jehovah.* Compare 52.10, Jehovah hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. The arm of Jehovah is a figure of speech for the work of Jehovah: the sending of the Servant is his work.

2. *Before him.* Before Jehovah.—*As a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground.* "Not like a stately tree, but like a lowly plant, struggling in arid ground. So the human life of the Messiah was one of obscurity and humility"

(*Dummelow*).—*And when we see him, there is no beauty.* Or, *that we shall look upon him; nor beauty,* RVm. "And it is equally true that multitudes today fail to recognize the majesty and grace of Jesus Christ. His great character does not appeal to them; they are not charmed by His career of mercy; His gracious doctrine elicits no sympathetic response; they do not see His beauty or feel His preciousness" (*Watkinson*).

3. *He was despised.* See Lk. 18.31-33.—*Rejected.* Or, *forsaken,* RVm. "What an Iliad of woes is condensed into these two words!" (*Maclaren*).—*Grief.* Or, *sickness,* RVm. "That description of mental or spiritual sorrows under the imagery of bodily sickness is intensified in the subsequent terrible picture of him as one from whom men hide their faces with disgust at his hideous appearance, caused by disease. Possibly the meaning may rather be that he hides his face, as lepers had to" (*Maclaren*).—*As one from whom men hide their face.* Or, *he hides as it were his face from us,* RVm.—*Despised.* See Mk. 10.33-34.—*We esteemed him not.* See Jn. 1.10-11. "We thought him nothing" (*Luther*).

4. *Surely he hath borne our griefs.* Or, *sicknesses,* RVm. See Mt. 8.17. The emphatic word here is *our.*—*We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.* "Stricken, that is, with a plague of sickness, as Job was, for the simile of the sick man is still kept up: smitten of God, for it seemed to them that God's hand was in the servant's sickness, to punish and disgrace him for his own sins: but now they knew they were wrong" (*Smith*).

5. *Wounded for our transgressions.* Heb. 9.28.—*Bruised for our iniquities.* Rom. 4.25; 1 Cor. 15.3.—*The chastisement of our peace.* Chastisement that procured our peace. Heb. 5.8.—*With his stripes we are healed.* Mt. 26.63; 27.12-14; Mk. 14.61; 15.5; Lk. 23.9; Jn. 19.9. "It is no mere coincidence that the story of the Passion reproduces so many of the details of the prophecy, for, although the fulfillment of the latter does not depend on such coincidences, they are not to be passed by as of no importance. Former generations made too much of the physical sufferings of Jesus; is not this generation in danger of making too little of them?" (*Maclaren*).

6. *Jehovah hath laid.* (Heb. *made to light,* RVm) *on him the iniquity of us all.* "The speakers confess that they know that the servant's suffering was both vicarious and redemptive. At first they were bewildered by the servant's suffering; then they thought it contemptible, thus passing upon it an intellectual judgment; then, forced to seek a moral reason for it, they accounted it as penal and due to the servant for his own sins; then they recognized that its penalty was vicarious, that the servant was suffering for them; and finally, they knew that it was redemptive, the means of their own healing and peace" (*Smith*).

7-9. "It is probable that with verse 6 the penitent people have ceased speaking, and that the parable is now taken up by the prophet himself" (*Smith*). Many scholars think that these are the words of "the Voice of the Lord," reaffirming the conclusions reached by the penitent people.

7. See Mt. 26.63; 27.12-14.—*He opened not his mouth.* "Silence under sufferings is a strange thing in the Old Testament—a thing absolutely new. No other Old Testament personage could stay dumb under pain, but immediately broke into one of two voices—voice of guilt or voice of doubt. Why was this servant the unique and solitary instance of silence under suffering? Because he had a secret which they had not. It had been said of him: 'My servant shall deal wisely,' shall know what he is about. He had no guilt of his own, no doubts of his God. But he was conscious of the end God had in his pain, an end not to be served in any other way, and with all his heart he had given himself to it" (*Smith*).

8. *By.* Or, *from,* RVm.—*By oppression and judgment he was taken away.* His persecution led to an unjust death.—*As for his generation.* As for his contemporaries, what did they think?—*Considered.* See Acts 3.17; 13.27; 1 Cor. 2.8.—*For the transgression...due?* The alternative reading in the margin places a question mark after *living* and continues: *for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

9. *A grave with the wicked.* "As they would do by putting him to death under strained forms of law, and then, somehow, the criminal destined to be

buried with other criminals was laid in a tomb with the rich" (*Maclaren*). Mt. 27.57-60.—*Although.* Or, *because,* RVm.—*He had done no violence.* 1 Pet. 2.22.

10. *It pleased Jehovah.* It was Jehovah's purpose. Acts 2.23; 4.28. "The Hebrew word has no necessary meaning of pleasure or enjoyment. All it says is, God so willed it (*Smith*).—*Put him to grief.* Heb. *made him sick,* RVm.—*When thou shalt make his soul.* Or, *when his soul shall make,* RVm.—*An offering.* Heb. *a trespass-offering,* RVm. Jn. 1.29.—*His seed.* His spiritual children.—*He shall prolong his days.* I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Rev. 1.18.

11-12. Jehovah is the speaker.—*He shall see...satisfied. He shall see and be satisfied with the travail of his soul,* RVm. See Jn. 10.14-18.—*By the knowledge of himself.* Or, *by his knowledge,* RVm. Rom. 5.18-19.—*Justify many.* Or, *make many righteous,* RVm.

12. *Therefore.* Because of his sufferings and work.—*Divide him a portion with the great.* Phil. 2.9-11.—*Poured out his soul unto death.* Mt. 26.38,39,42.—*Numbered with the transgressors.* Lk. 22.37.—*He bare the sin of many.* 2 Cor. 5.21.—*Made intercession.* Or, *maketh,* RVm.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

15. *So shall he sprinkle many nations.* The reference is to the purification of "the unclean" before engaging in worship: the water for impurity hath not been sprinkled upon him, he is unclean, Num. 19.20.

15. *Kings shall shut their mouths.* The Talmud has a dialogue between a blind rabbi and a Sadducee which expresses the thought that awe is shown by silence. They were waiting for a royal procession. There was a great uproar as the first part of the procession passed, and the Sadducee said, "Here is the king." The blind rabbi disagreed with him. "Here is the king," again the Sadducee declared as a second division passed, and again the rabbi said it could not be. Then a third division passed in silence, and this time the blind rabbi declared, "Here is the king." "How do you know?" questioned the Sadducee. "Because," answered the rabbi, "the kingdom of earth is like the kingdom of heaven."

1. *To whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?* To reveal the arm, to make bare the arm, are figures of speech that mean *to show one's power,* to make ready for work. There is a reference in these figures to the fact that the loose sleeves of both outer and inner garments of the oriental costume can be quickly pushed upward and the arm bared, made free for action.

3. *One from whom men hide their face.* It was customary for mourners to cover their head. David and all the people with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went, 2 Sam. 15.30. The leper was required by law to cover his upper lip, Lev. 13.45.

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray.* It is of interest in this connection to recall the oriental law that a sheep that has strayed to an enemy must be ransomed.

8. *As for his generation, who among them considered...due.* It is said in the Mishna that before any one was punished for a capital crime proclamation was made before the prisoner by a public crier, in these words: Whosoever knows anything of this man's innocence, let him come and declare it.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the words of Dr. George Adam Smith in his Introduction to the Book of Isaiah: The size and the many obscurities of the Book of Isaiah have limited the common use of it in the English tongue to single, conspicuous passages the very brilliance of which has cast their context and original circumstances into deeper shade. The intensity of gratitude with which men have seized upon the more evangelical passages of Isaiah have confirmed the neglect of the rest of the Book. But we might as well expect to receive an adequate conception of a great stateman's policy from the epigrams and perorations of his speeches as to appreciate the message, which God has sent to the world through the Book of Isaiah, from a few lectures on isolated, and often dislocated texts.

Patiently to learn how the great prophecies were suggested by, and first met, the actual occasions of human life, is vividly to hear them speaking home to life still.

For the connection of to-day's prophecy in regard to the Servant of Jehovah with the other prophecies in Isaiah, see the discussion in regard to the meaning of the term, p. 273. For its setting in the Book of Isaiah, see p. 30.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Begin your lesson with the story from the New York Tribune, p. 278. Continue with a talk in which you tell about people you know who have willingly suffered for the sake of others. Lead your pupils to talk of what a mother suffers when her child is sick or disobedient. In all these cases, tell them, we have a faint glimpse of what Jesus Christ endured for the sake of others. A prophet who lived when the kingdom of Judah was in trouble and was disobedient to God, looked ahead and saw the time when a Redeemer should come to save His people from their sins by His suffering, and in the words he then wrote we can see the life of our Savior, sent by God many, many years afterwards because He so loved the world. Such words as these need be your only reference to the lesson text in Isaiah: continue with the fulfillment of the words in the life of Jesus.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. About what year was it that Sennacherib invaded Judah but could not capture Jerusalem? Seven hundred years after that who was born? How long did He live? After Jesus had been crucified and had arisen from the dead and ascended into heaven, His disciples, you remember, carried on His work. One day Philip, the evangelist, was going along the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza and he met an Ethiopian General who had been to Jerusalem to worship and was returning. The great man was reading as he rode along in his chariot. Do you remember what it was that he was reading? This was one of our lessons two years ago. Let us turn to it in the Book of Acts, eighth chapter, and read the thirty-second and thirty-third verses. What was it Philip asked as he ran to him, verse thirty? And what did the Ethiopian answer? No wonder the Ethiopian, a foreigner, could not understand this prophecy of Isaiah without help. Philip joined him in the chariot, and then the Ethiopian asked, Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? Then Philip began with this scripture and preached unto him Jesus. And now we will take this same prophecy from Isaiah, and see how it was fulfilled by Jesus.

For Older Pupils. "It always seems to me as I read Isaiah," says a writer in the *Evangelical Friend*, "that he had climbed the mountain, above the dust and smoke of the valley, above the clouds and storms of the mountain side, and there in the clear, upper air he could see afar off. He could gaze through the isles of time and see, as though before his very eyes, the coming of the Son of Man, His sufferings and death, and the glorious possibilities which that death implied. Isaiah, dwelling near to God, was a splendid messenger for God."

There is a familiar diagram in books on optics and perspective, which all of you have seen. (Trace it on the board as you describe it.) Here is the eye and from the eye diverging lines are drawn. Here not far from the eye they enclose a very small figure of a man. The lines are prolonged farther, and as they widen out there is here a much larger sized man. Isaiah had a mountain-top vision: his eyes could look far into the future and see a coming Redeemer for Israel and for all nations: it was no small figure close to the eyes that he saw but one far off of gigantic proportions. We may not know just what that figure meant to him, in his own mind, when he described it in the words of fifty-third Isaiah, one of the most wonderful passages in all literature. But there is no doubt of what it means to us, who can compare with that dimly outlined figure the glorious figure of Him who healed many that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Foretold Christ

Are we Right in Fitting the Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament to Jesus Christ? It is often said that the writers of the Old Testament predict the coming of a Person, whom they call the Anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ. Have you the idea that the prophets habitually published disconnected bits of information concerning the future; and that when we compare these bits of information with what we know concerning Jesus we find them fitting together in a consistent whole; and that this accredits the divine mission of both the prophets and Jesus? I think that this is an essentially correct statement of certain parts of the truth, but it is an incomplete statement; and its incompleteness renders it complicated, and leaves it open to attack.

The prophetic teaching of the doctrine of the Promise appears in the declaration that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3.15), and elsewhere in the record of the times before Abraham, but the emphasized beginning of it is in connection with the call of Abraham. Abraham is constituted the father of the multitude of the nations (Gen. 17.4-5; Rom. 4.16-17), in whom all mankind are to be blessed. To accomplish this he is to be the father, that is, the ancestral head, of a specific group of nations and of a line of kings, and is to possess Canaan and to have other specified advantages (Gen. 17.6 ff. and many other passages). For the time of the exodus this promise is renewed, with much reiteration, to the descendants of Abraham. The Promise is again emphasized in the time of David, David and his descendants being made prominent in it.

It is in this connection that the word Messiah, "anointed," becomes significant. A king was anointed in token that Jehovah made him King. Saul was Jehovah's Anointed. David and his royal descendants were each Jehovah's Anointed. The Anointed one is the man who reigns in Jehovah's earth-kingdom.

Side by side with this conception of the house of David as Jehovah's son, Jehovah's Anointed, the inheritor of the Promise, the prophets maintained the conception of Israel as Jehovah's son, Jehovah's Servant, the inheritor of the Promise. They do not think of what they say concerning the house of David as in contradiction with what they say concerning Israel. In their thought the interests of David and of Jehovah's people are interests in common. What they magnify, in their Messianic teaching, is not the idea of a coming person, but this Promise that Jehovah has made to Israel and to David.

Does it follow that Christendom has been mistaken in saying that Jesus Christ was foretold by the prophets? Must we say that when they spoke of the Anointed one they meant the reigning king of Judah, and not Jesus Christ? Must we say that the Servant, despised and rejected of men, but none the less God's appointed judge of the nations (Isa. 53; 42.1-4), is the people Israel and not Jesus Christ? Must we take the ground that the many passages which the New Testament and we are accustomed to quote as predictions of Jesus Christ are so only in an indirect way, and by accommodation?

No, these consequences do not follow. In proof of this one might cite a large mass of evidence, but two or three considerations must suffice.

The prophets everywhere speak of the Promise as eternally operative. From the time of Abraham on they emphasize this. This is significant. A promise that will never cease being fulfilled stands on a different footing from one of brief limits of time.

Any devout, thoughtful retainer of Abraham believed that Jehovah had covenanted that all mankind should be blessed in Abraham's seed, and that the covenant was for eternity. If the question had been asked him he would have said that the fulfillment would still be in progress nineteen hundred years in the future, in the promised land. We have no means of knowing that he thought that it would take the form of a person named Jesus traversing the land, healing and teaching and at length dying and rising from the dead, all for the salvation of men; but he looked forward to that or to any other supposed date with the belief that the fulfillment would then be in progress.

If some supernatural being could have pictured to him the career of Jesus, he would have regarded that as a fulfillment fully meeting his expectations.

The Promise was universal in its scope as well as eternal. As given to Abraham it included all the nations. As amplified in the promise it presents many glowing pictures of universal peace, of the nations made subject to the law of Jehovah, to His Servant, to the house of David. Suppose a retainer of Abraham or one of the later prophets had been asked what would be the state of things under the Promise at the date, then future, which we now designate as A. D. 1900; the prompt reply would have been that the promise will then still be operative, that the Anointed king of the line of David will then still be on the throne. If some one could have made them understand the history as we now understand it; could have made them understand what Jehovah would accomplish for mankind through the seed of Abraham in matters of civilization, art, commerce, literature, government, comfortable living, enterprise, morality, and in the great monotheistic religions, and especially in the person and mission and influence of Jesus; they certainly would have regarded all this as wonderfully meeting the expectations they cherished concerning the Promise and the kingdom and the Anointed.

The Promise afforded the prophets a peculiar point of view from which to consider the people of Israel, or the reigning king or any typical Israelite. In multitudes of passages the prophets speak of Israel exclusively from this Promise point of view, and it is mainly from these that the New Testament Messianic citations are taken. It is characteristic of these passages that often their statements might apply equally either to Israel or to some typical Israelite. The New Testament writers are correct in regarding such passages as referring to Jesus not by accommodation, but in their direct and proper meaning. From the point of view of Jehovah's blessing for mankind through Abraham, Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the one typical Israelite, or, if you prefer, an antitypal Israelite. From this point of view Jesus Christ is Israel in culmination. The things spoken concerning the Promise refer ultimately to Him, in their strictest as well as in their highest meaning. Condensed from an article in the *Sunday-school Times* by *Professor Willis J. Beecher.*

Prophecies of the Christ. To those who believe in a God who governs human thought, and prepares His own way before His face, it will not be hard to believe that this element in prophecy is indeed a coming event casting its shadow before. The stretching out of human hands in hope and desire, and the coming of the Unspeakable Gift in the fulness of time, were parts of the same process. During the world's morning twilight of expectation God took many an elect soul up the watch-tower with Him, that He and they might look together at the kindly east and tell others the signs of promise that they saw upon the sky. And when the Christ came, is was not hard for Him to find in many psalms and prophecies things concerning Himself. *J. M. E. Ross,* in *The Self-Portraiture of Jesus.*

II Vicarious Suffering

For the Sake of her Friend. A party of a hundred children of the slums had been taken for a visit into the country and were on their way home. The attendant heard a chorus of gibes all aimed at Rosie, one of the little girls, and then she saw that the girl was wearing a pair of shoes of very large size. Then the attendant remembered that Rosie had had a pair of new shoes, and she asked what had become of them. "Well," said Rosie, "you see these shoes ain't mine. They're Katie's. I know they're awful big, but her mamma ain't had any work lately, so she couldn't buy her a new pair. She just gave her own shoes to Katie.

"Katie felt awful bad about it, and cried all the way to the station. The girls all laughed at her. So I just lent her my new ones and took hers.

"You see, teacher," said Rosie, raising her eyes to the attendant's face, "Katie's my friend." *New York Tribune.*

Why Vicarious Suffering is a Redemptive Force. Substitutive suffering is a great living fact of human experience. In every nation, in every family, the innocent suffer for the guilty. Vicarious suffering is not arbitrary nor accidental; it comes with our growth; it is part of the very nature of things.

It is that part of the Service of Man to which we daily grow more aware. Vicarious suffering is a Service—Service for God. It proves a power where every other moral force has failed. By it men are redeemed, on whom justice and their proper punishment have been able to effect nothing. Why this is so is very intelligible. We awaken to the guilt and heinousness of our sin when it reaches and implicates lives which were not partners with us in it. Moreover, while a man's punishment is apt to give him an excuse for saying, I have expiated my sin myself, and so to leave him self-satisfied and with nothing for which to be grateful or obliged to a higher will; or while it may make him reckless or plunge him into despair; so, on the contrary, when he recognizes that others feel the pain of his sin and have come under its weight, then shame is quickly born within him, and pity and every other passion that can melt a hard heart. If, moreover, the others who bear his sin do so voluntarily and for love's sake, then how quickly on the back of shame and pity does gratitude rise, and the sense of debt and of constraint to their will! For all these very intelligible reasons, vicarious suffering has been a powerful redemptive force in the experience of the race. *George Adam Smith,* in *The Book of Isaiah.*

All Salvation comes through Suffering. Did the Great Unknown, looking through the centuries, get some glimpse of Calvary, of the blood-stained face, and of the thorn-crowned brow, or did he only learn from the anguish of the past that all victory comes through battle and all salvation through suffering? Did he only see the general truth which too many men have failed to see, even though it is focused and centralized historically in Jesus of Nazareth? I do not know. Only this I know: that nowhere, not even by Paul, is that truth more splendidly illustrated than in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and nowhere has it such divine illustration as in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. *Lyman Abbott,* in *Lectures on the Hebrew Prophets.*

III The Great Sacrifice

Saved by Sacrifice. The following is a true story, the record of which is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The tower of St. Leonard's Church, Bridgenorth, was left open, and two young boys, wandering in, were tempted to mount up into the upper part and scramble from beam to beam. All at once a joist gave way. The beam on which they were standing became displaced. The elder boy had just time to grasp it when falling, while the younger, slipping over his body, caught hold of his comrade's legs. In this fearful position the poor lads hung, crying vainly for help, for no one was near. At length the boy clinging to the beam became exhausted. He could no longer support the double weight. He called out to the lad below that they were both "done for." "Could you save yourself if I were to loose my hold of you?" replied the younger lad. "I think I could," returned the elder boy. "Then good-bye, and God bless you!" cried the little fellow, loosing his hold. Another second and he was dashed to pieces on the stone floor below, as his companion clambered to a place of safety. *Sunday-School Chronicle.*

The Great Sacrifice pictured by Art. The walls of the Boston Public Library are decorated with wonderful paintings by Sargeant. In one of them there is the majestic figure of Christ stretched upon the cross: the blood dripping from the pierced hands is being caught in chalices held by Adam kneeling on one side and Eve kneeling on the other. A great robe enshrouds all three, picturing the thought of the community of Nature between Christ on the cross and our humanity represented by Adam and Eve. The Latin legend written over the cross in great letters means, "The sins of the world are remitted." The marvelous painting tells better than words can that the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The Power of the Great Sacrifice. There used to be a wonderful and mighty man working in the slums of Water Street, New York. He had an old store cleaned; it was filled with benches, and there were a platform and an organ, and three times on Sunday and every single night in the week, the year round, Jerry McAuley used to hold a meeting there. And his audience—oh, what an audience it was!—the most degraded men and women that you ever saw together were for the most part his audience. He only had one story to tell,

and that was the story of his experience, and his experience was something like this. He told how he had been just as bad a man as a man could be, how he had broken every commandment, how he had been a river thief and all sorts of other thieves and how he had been in the penitentiary for ever so long, and how somehow he had got a vision of Jesus Christ and this Jesus Christ through His atonement forgave him his sins and he was then a free man. Then he used to say this—it was a sort of rough way of putting it, but then it was wonderfully expressive coming from his lips:—"What is the use in lugging round your sins. I do not lug round mine; I have given them all to Jesus Christ, and He has taken them all and set me free. What is the use of lugging round your sins?" And I have seen the heads of these battered, dissipated people bowed. I have seen them kneel. I have seen Jerry lay his hands upon them and bind them to Jesus Christ; and some afternoons afterwards I have seen these very men and women, clothed and in their right minds sitting there praising God because they had found that Christ, as Jerry had said, had taken their sins upon Himself and had made them free. Why, the most lost man has a chance through the atonement of Christ. This sacrifice of the purest person opens the door of hope towards the forgiveness of sins. No man need despair. *Wayland Hoyt,* in *The Christian World Pulpit.*

How the Great Sacrifice should be Accepted. There is a story told of the great Dr. Doddridge. During his Northampton ministry an Irishman was convicted of sheep-stealing, and, according to the cruel custom of the time, condemned to death. Dr. Doddridge did everything he could to save him, but in vain. When the man was being driven in the death-cart to the place of execution, he asked that they should stop at Dr. Doddridge's house, and they did. Then he said: "Dr. Doddridge, every drop of my blood loves you, every vein of my heart loves you, because you tried to save me." And how shall we carry ourselves to Christ, who died and lives to save us? Say to Him: "Shall I not love Thee back again for all the miracle of divine love Thou hast brought to me?" For He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. *W. Robertson Nicoll,* in *British Weekly.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Pain, in God's service, shall lead to glory. *George Adam Smith.*

A life on service bent,
A life for love laid down,
It is the life for others spent,
Which God will crown *Allenson.*

From the Old Testament point of view the progress is made from the knowledge of Christ to the knowledge of Jesus: from the New Testament point of view, the progress is made from the knowledge of Jesus to the knowledge of Christ. *Bengel.*

Though there has been only One who actually bore men's sins, only One who has made men righteous, yet it is a permanent truth that God-fearing men in all ages constitute a servant of the Lord, through whose sufferings mankind is brought to own and to love the sway of God. *R. M. Moffat.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Read the first six verses of the fifty-third chapter through changing the general pronouns into the personal pronoun, the *we* into *I,* the *our* into *my.* Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock has told how a young girl came to Mr. Morehouse, a noted evangelist, and told him she wanted to be a Christian. He bade her read the fifty-third chapter and make it personal to herself. She did so and burst into tears as she finished reading: But he was wounded for *my* transgressions; he was bruised for *my* iniquities; the chastisement of *my* peace upon him; and with his stripes *I* am healed. And Mr. Morehouse said to her: This is all we need to do to be saved—to lay hold upon Him by faith, of whom Isaiah speaks.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The Servant's Humiliation and Exaltation contrasted, 13-15.
II. The Servant's Suffering not understood, 1-3.
III. The Servant's Suffering understood, 4-6.
IV. The Servant's Death and Future Life, 7-9.
V. The Servant's Reward, 10-12.

Jehovah.—Behold, My servant, he who executes My will, shall deal wisely so as to be exalted. As many were astonished because they could not understand his sufferings, his visage and form disfigured by disease, so when he is exalted he shall startle many nations, kings shall be silent with surprise when he is really known and understood.

The Prophet and Repentant Israel.—We heard, but who of us believed the prophecies, who of us saw the revelation of God's purpose? We did not because the Servant grew up like a lowly plant in arid soil; his form and appearance were unattractive; he had no beauty that drew us to him. What sufferings were his! Despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, despised as a leper from whom men turn quickly away—we did not esteem him. Now we see that he was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows; yet then we thought him stricken by God for his own sins. But it was our transgressions for which he was wounded, our iniquities for which he was bruised; his chastisement wrought our peace, his stripes our healing. Like sheep we have strayed, each one of us following his own way; and on him Jehovah laid the iniquity of us all.

The Prophet alone.—He endured oppression, affliction, unresistingly: he was as mute as a lamb led to the sacrifice, as a sheep before its shearers. His persecution led to an unjust death, but who of his contemporaries considered that he was slain for the sin of my people to whom the stroke was due? And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich man he was buried, for he was not a criminal. It was the will of Jehovah that he should suffer. When put to death as a trespass-offering he shall yet live and see his children, those who have his spirit, and he shall carry out Jehovah's purposes.

Jehovah.—He shall see the work of his soul and be satisfied; through their knowledge of him he shall make many righteous; he shall bear their sins. Therefore he shall be rewarded by having a place among the great ones of the world because he willingly suffered death and was counted among the transgressors: yet it was the sin of many that he bore, and for their transgressions he interceded.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The problem of suffering.
2. The problem of the Servant of Jehovah.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the account of Manasseh's reign in 2 K. 21. What is there told which is not recorded in 2 Ch.? 2. What is meant by altars for the host of heaven? (Astral worship, Bible dictionaries, and clipping, p 283.) 3. What is meant by the first part of the sixth verse? (Bible dictionaries and clipping, p. 283.) 4. What can you learn about the cruelty of Assyrian kings? (Clipping, p. 284.) 5. Where was the Valley of the Son of Hinnom? (Clipping, p. 285.) 6. What had been Jehoshaphat's advice in regard to heeding the words of the prophets? (2 Ch. 20.20.) 7. What did Manasseh do after his penitence and pardon? (Verses 14-17.)

Questions to think about. 1. What sort of king was Manasseh's father? 2. How can you account for the adoption of idolatry so soon after Hezekiah's reforms? (Clipping, p. 285.) 3. Who was the first king of Judah to introduce Baal worship? Was Manasseh worse than he? 4. Of how many evil things is Manasseh accused? 5. Why is it said that the king and his people did more evil than the heathen nations, when they only copied these nations? 6. How did God speak to Manasseh, v. 10? (2 K. 21.10.)

Note-book Work. In your Book of the Prophets write in your own words Isaiah's Prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant of the Lord.

LESSON III—JULY 16

MANASSEH'S WICKEDNESS AND PENITENCE

Golden Text

Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Isa. 1.16, 17.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 33.1-20. Manasseh's Wickedness and Penitence. **T.** Ps. 119.65-80. "In Faithfulness thou hast Afflicted me." **W.** Heb. 12.1-13. What Father Chasteneth not his Son? **T.** Ps. 94.1-23. "Blessed is the Man whom thou Chastenest." **F.** Prov. 3.1-12. "Whom the Lord Loveth he Reproveth." **S.** Job 5.17-27. He Woundeth and Maketh Whole. **S.** Rev. 3.14-22. As Many as I love I Reprove. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 33.1-20 PRINT vv. 1-13 COMMIT vv. 12, 13

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned
fifty and five years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did that which was evil in the
sight of Jehovah, after the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast
out before the children of Israel. 3 For he built again the high places which
Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baalim,
and made Asheroth, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
4 And he built altars in the house of Jehovah, whereof Jehovah said, In Jeru-
salem shall my name be for ever. 5 And he built altars for all the host of
heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah. 6 He also made his chil-
dren to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; and he prac-
tised augury, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and dealt with
them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in
the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. 7 And he set the graven image
of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God, of which God said to
David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have
chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8 neither
will I any more remove the foot of Israel from off the land which I have
appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have com-
manded them, even all the law and the statutes and the ordinances *given* by
Moses. 9 And Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so
that they did evil more than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before
the children of Israel.

10 And Jehovah spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed.
11 Wherefore Jehovah brought upon them the captains of the host of the king
of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and
carried him to Babylon. 12 And when he was in distress, he besought Jehovah
his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 And
he prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication,
and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew
that Jehovah he was God.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-9. See 2 K. 21.

2. *After the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out.* See lesson 12, second quarter.

3. *High places.* See p. 81.—*Hezekiah had broken down.* 2 Ch. 31.1.—*The Baalim.* Plural of Baal. See p. 71.—*Asheroth.* See p. 71.—*All the host of heaven.* The heavenly bodies were worshipped in Assyria, and this "astral wor-

ship" Manasseh established in Judah: it had been established in Israel, 2 K. 17.16.

4. *Altars in the house of Jehovah.* Idolatrous altars in the temple.—*In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.* See 2 Ch. 7.16.

5. *The two courts of the house of Jehovah.* See 2 Ch. 4.9.

6. *Made his children to pass through fire.* As Ahaz had done, 2 Ch. 28.3. See below.—*In the Valley of the Son of Hinnom.* Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but The Valley of Slaughter: for they shall bury in Topheth, till there be no place to bury, Jer. 7.32.—*Augury.* "Perhaps, as the original suggests, by watching the motions of the clouds" (*Dummelow*).—*Enchantments.* "Or charms by means of serpents" (*Murphy*).—*Sorcery.* "The Hebrew word is said to mean 'made a magic brew with shredded herbs'" (*Barnes*).—*Them that had familiar spirits.* Ventriloquists, such as the witch of Endor, 1 S. 28.7-25.

7. *The graven image.* Called in 2 K. 21.7 the graven image of Asherah.—*I will put my name for ever.* Verse 4.

8. *Which I have appointed for your fathers.* See 2 S. 7.10.—*If only.* This is the constant warning of the prophets.

10. *Jehovah spake to Manasseh, and to his people.* He spoke by His servants the prophets, 2 K. 21.10.

11. *The captains of the host of the king of Assyria.* The king was probably Assurbanipal (though possibly his father Esarhaddon), and the expression indicates that he sent his army but did not go himself.—*In chains.* Or, *with hooks,* RVm. See p. 284.

13. *Brought him again to Jerusalem.* The Assyrian king was the human agent, through whom God wrought. See p. 270.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

3. *Worshipped all the host of heaven.* That cult was Babylonian, and its adoption at this time by Jerusalem was due to the political and social subjection of Judah to Assyria. The host of heaven were the sun, moon and stars, and at this time they probably added to the significance of one of the most sacred names of the God of Israel, Jehovah of Hosts, which had originally meant God of the armies of Israel. But because belief in them as real deities had not died out of Israel it was the more easy to introduce their worship into Jerusalem. The first reasons for this were doubtless political. Their altars and rites were the official acknowledging of the subjection of the Jewish state to the Empire, among whose most popular deities was Ishtar, the planet Venus, "queen of heaven." That the mass of the population of Jerusalem readily yielded to the attractions of a worship with which so many of their native instincts and conceptions of the universe were in sympathy, is proved by the evidence alike of the prophets, the legislators, and the annalists of Judah. The Book of Deuteronomy twice especially distinguishes the host of heaven as objects which Israel must not let themselves be drawn away to adore. The site of the city, high and open to heaven—within view, too, of the long edge of the Moabite plateau over which the moon and the planets rise with impressive majesty—was particularly suitable for a worship conducted without idols, by direct adoration of its heavenly objects, and by offerings so simple as to be within reach of the poorest worshippers. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

The Goddess Ishtar

6. *He made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the Son of Hinnom.* In the Old Testament there are several references to the passing of children through the fire to Moloch. What was the ceremony? Jewish

midrashim say that children were roasted to death in the arms of a red-hot idol. Some believe that they were merely passed over the fire, according to a ceremony which still exists here and there. Others that the children were first put to death, and then burnt in the fire as holocausts.

To whom were these terrible sacrifices offered? The name is given in the Hebrew text as Molech. Now *Molech* is usually taken as a corruption for *melech,* and *melech* is the ordinary Hebrew word for *king.* It may be, therefore, that these sacrifices were made to any god who might happen to be the king of any particular nation. It may be that they were offered by the Israelites to Jehovah. They are two interpretations as to the meaning of the rite. The simplest explanation is that the sacrifice to Molech was a particular application of the ancient law which devoted to the Deity the first-born, whether of cattle or of human beings. The other explanation is that the children were sacrificed in order to prolong the life of the human king. The sacrifice might have a vicarious value. There are examples of kings, and queens also, who offered their children, not for the sin of their soul, but for the continuance of their days. For they believed that their god would be satisfied for a time, as a hungry wolf might be, by devouring one of their children. Might he not even be satisfied at last by devouring them one after another, and so let the king literally live for ever? Yet the sacrifice of the children might have not a vicarious, but a magical value. That is to say, the earthly king believed that when a child was put to death, if the proper rites were employed, its young life might be made to pass into his aged body, and enable him to renew his strength. *Expository Times.*

6. *Used enchantments.* On a bright day in early spring, year fifteen of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, great king of Babylon, you and I pass through the streets of Babylon, when our attention is attracted by loud talk and lamentations from a crowd assembled at one side. Pressing forward and peeping over the heads of the people, we see a man stretched upon a mattress, and apparently just about to die.

A few weeping friends kneel at his side, and we learn that he has been brought from his house, and laid down in the public marketplace, in the vain hope that some one may propose a remedy which shall save his life. This custom, so strange to us, is common in Babylon, they say, when all else has failed, when doctors and sorcerers have done their best.

To-day, as ever, each one of the crowd has a different remedy to propose, though all are agreed as to the cause of illness. A demon possessed the man, of that there is no question. "Try the recipe of Assurbanipal the Assyrian," cries one. "It is well known and never fails. Six different kinds of wood, a bit of snake skin, some wine, and a piece of ox flesh. Make a paste and cause the sick man to swallow it."

A man hurries up with a handful of clay, and molds a little figure which he displays as the image of the sick man. We cannot see the resemblance, but the crowd presses forward and watches his motions with eager curiosity. He calls for a cup of wine, pours part of it over the image, and after drinking the rest, mutters an incantation. All in vain, while he is yet speaking, the family of the sick man raises a chorus of wails, in which the crowd joins. The man is dead; no charms can avail him more. *Emma J. Arnold,* in *Stories of Ancient Peoples.*

LIGHT FROM THE MONUMENTS

11. *The king of Assyria took Manasseh in chains* (or *with hooks*) *and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.* On an Assyrian inscription Assurbanipal says: With the knife which I use to cut meat I made a hole in his (an Arabian king's) jaw. I passed a ring through his upper lip. I attached it to a chain with which one leads the dogs in leash.

The illustration opposite page 282 shows how captives were treated by Assyrian kings. The Rev. C. J. Ball describes it as follows: This monument was discovered in the ruins of Singirli, north of Antioch, in the Taurus range, which represents the ancient city of Sam'al, the capital of a Hittite kingdom. Upon the front of the monolith we have a representation of Esarhaddon in his royal

robes, with two figures at his feet. The first of these is a negro, whose hands and feet are bound with fetters, and who kneels in a suppliant attitude before the king. This, the inscription informs us, is Tirkakah, king of Egypt and Ethiopia, while the standing figure is probably the king of Sam'al. In front of the king's head are a number of figures of the gods invoked in the inscription—Bel, Rimmon, Merodach, and the goddess Ishtar (Ashtoreth) represented as standing on the backs of animals.

13. *Brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom.* An interesting account in the Assyrian inscriptions shows that such clemency was in accord with Assurbanipal's policy. Necho the vassal king of Memphis and Sais, had joined Tirkakah in his revolt against Assyria and had been brought to Nineveh in chains. The inscription gives Assurbanipal's words in regard to him: To Necho...of them, favor I granted him...costly garments I placed upon him, ornaments of gold, his royal image I made for him, bracelets of gold I fastened on his limbs, a steel sword, its sheath of gold, in the glory of my name, more than I write, I gave him. Chariots, horses, and mules, for his royal riding, I appointed him. My generals as governors to assist with him I sent.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jerusalem was saved from capture by Sennacherib in Hezekiah's reign, but Judah either remained a subject kingdom of Assyria or was made one soon after Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, came to the throne. During Manasseh's reign all western Asia and Egypt were included in the great Assyrian empire. An inscription on a triumphal stele of Esarhaddon (king of Assyria 680-668 B. C.) gives a list of twenty-two tributary kings who furnished building material for his new palace, and among them is "Manasseh, king of the country of Judah." Assurbanipal (668-626 B. C.) declares on an inscription that "In the course of my expedition (to Egypt and Ethiopia) twenty-two kings of the side of the sea and middle of the sea, all tributaries depended upon me, to my presence came and kissed my feet." Manasseh's name is on the list of these kings, given on another inscription. Another evidence of Assyrian influence in Judah has recently been discovered at Gezer on two tablets, deeds of the sale of land in 651 and 649 B. C. Fields belonging to a man with a Jewish name were sold and the sales registered in the Assyrian language, and in the one case the notary bore the Assyrian name of Nergal-sharusur.

Clay Impression from Seal of Esarhaddon

It seems strange that the great religious reforms of Hezekiah were so quickly followed in his son's reign by the revival of Canaanite idolatries as well as the introduction of the Babylonian astral worship. But throughout the history of Judah we have seen that the people readily followed their king. Dr. George Adam Smith explains that "we must recall the congenital heathenism of Jerusalem on which Ezekiel insists; the prevalence of such forms of worship all around Judah, but especially in Samaria; and also the probable addition to the population from the Judean towns devastated by Sennacherib in which Canaanite cults still survived, from the Palestine and Phœnician cities that had suffered by the campaigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, and from the great increase in trade under the Assyrian lordship of Western Asia.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Valley of the Son of Hinnom, called more often the Valley of Hinnom, was the narrow ravine on the west and south of Jerusalem. Ge-hinnom was corrupted into Gehenna, the name given to the place of everlasting torment.

When Manasseh was taken captive to Babylon he did not go directly east across the desert, but went through Syria, northeastward to the Euphrates and then down the route of that river to Babylon. See the map. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, but Babylon had been conquered by Tiglath-Pileser and during most of the time afterward until the overthrow of the Assyrian power in 607 B. C. it was in subjection to Assyria. At this time Assurbanipal frequently resided here. Have the map with the two routes page 53 copied on the board.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

In a Sunday-school in Japan the lesson one day was about Manasseh. On the wall there hung a large colored picture of the king a prisoner in chains in a foreign land. The uplifted head and hands showed that he was praying. "Why was the king put in prison?" the teacher asked. "He sinned," answered a little boy. "And do you know what sin is?" "It is giving up to the evil one." "What is the king doing?" "He is praying." "And what is prayer?" "It is talking to God." "Did God hear him?" "Yes, and He sent him back to his own country." What that little Japanese boy knew is what your pupils should learn. The Golden Text is your theme to-day; the words of Rabbi Singer, p. 287, the lesson you should teach.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Twice a day the boatmen on the river Trent, England, send up throughout the river's course a cry of warning that the great tidal wave, or bore, is coming. The incoming tide from the ocean enters the Humber River, and when it meets the narrower Trent it can no longer spread out as it has been doing, and so it rises on top of the stream which is flowing in the other direction into the Humber. As it advances with a terrible roar up stream, it rises higher and higher, a wall of seemingly angry water with foaming crest, five or six feet high at Gainsborough. It comes so swiftly and with such force that any boats left unanchored are wrecked. The word of warning which the boatmen shout one to another have a strange sound to us. They are "'Ware Ægir!" Beware the Ægir! It is a cry that comes down from the times when the pagan Danes invaded England. They could not understand this fierce tidal wave; they thought it must be a god, and they named it Ægir.

Again and again in the history of Judah and Israel we have seen their kings turning to false gods and have heard their prophets bidding them beware their Ægirs. How many of the kings of Judah about whom we have studied were guilty of worshipping false gods? One of the worst idolaters was the king of our lesson. What is his name? Who was his father? What sort of king was his father?

For Older Pupils. Bishop Ken, of the Church of England, the chaplain of Charles II, was wont fearlessly to reprove that monarch for his vices and follies, but Charles never heeded his reproof. "I must go and hear Ken tell me of my faults," he would say with great good humor. Possibly Manasseh received the reproof of his "chaplains," the prophets, in the same spirit; certainly he gave no heed to their words. Although the son and successor of Hezekiah, one of the best of Judah's kings, who instituted great religious reforms, Manasseh was one of the worst of idolaters and during his long reign he led Judah far astray.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Sinning against Warning

Severer Treatment needed. It was not without warning that Manasseh fell into the habit of doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Faithfully God's prophets had declared that His promises to His chosen people were conditional—if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them. And Jehovah spake to Manasseh and to his people; but they gave no heed.

Judas did not rush blindly to his fate. For two years, at least, he lived with Jesus, and Jesus, seeing his peril, sounded again and again a warning note. Yet Judas failed to heed the repeated warnings, and harbored his thoughts and they led him on to his dastardly deed.

It is not for lack of warning, line upon line, precept upon precept, that evil deeds are committed now. Seldom is a sinner ignorant of the results of sin; he sins against repeated warnings.

Printed copies of local ordinances against over-speeding of automobiles are posted in many cities, but conscienceless chauffeurs do not heed them. Occasionally an offender is arrested and fined, but he continues to drive as reck-

lessly as ever. In a suburb of Chicago, Glencoe, a bump made at every street crossing has proved of more service. The chauffeur who will not heed the printed warning will slow up for the bumps, for he cannot drive over them at greater speed than is lawful without danger to the machine and its occupants. One who has once been jounced out of the automobile hereafter obeys the law. So it seems that Manasseh, who would not heed the prophets' words of warning, had to be more severely dealt with, and after he had felt the punishment he had brought upon himself, he was ready humbly to obey the divine ordinances.

The Mark of Folly. Does the drunkard take a glass the less because he knows that if he goes on he will have a drunkard's liver and die a miserable death? Does the gambler ever take away his hand from the pack of cards or the dice-box, because he knows that playing means, in the long run, poverty and disgrace? When a man sets his will upon a certain course, he is like a bull that has started in its rage. Down goes his head, and, with eyes shut, he will charge a stone wall or an iron door, though he knows it will smash his skull. Men are very foolish animals; and there is no greater mark of their folly than the conspicuous and oft-repeated fact that the clearest vision of the consequences of a course of conduct is powerless to turn a man from it, when once his passions, or his will, or worse still, his weakness, or worst of all, his habits, have bound him to it. *Dr. Maclaren,* in *The Victor's Crown.*

II Cease to do Evil; learn to do well

A Glad Truth. Old and sin-hardened as Manasseh was, when he turned to God in humble penitence, God heard his supplication. In his last years he cast out of the temple and the city the heathen idols he had brought there, built up the altar of the Lord and offered sacrifices thereon, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord. He turned from the worship of idols to the worship of the true God. It is a wonderful truth that there is no one who can not right about face and ceasing from doing evil learn to do well.

Professor L. H. Bailey, of Cornell, has told in the *Independent* how he transformed a wild strawberry plant. "I gave the wild plants a warm and pleasant knoll in the backyard," he says, "and they grew and thrived. At the end of two years I found that the distinguishing ancestral marks had disappeared, and I had a new type of plant. At first it was a squat, blue-leaved, short-trussed, densely-hairy, bashful plant, just brought from the wilds of Oregon; then, the next year, a little more erect, the leaves thinner and more delicate, and a more confident and aspiring attitude; and the third year, a tall-growing, green-leaved, high-trussed, thinly-hairy plant, with ambitions to rival the garden strawberry. I began with *Fragaria Chiloensis,* but ended with *Fragaria Grandiflora,* and I had the very same plants—the identical roots—to end with that I had to begin with." So the sinner can yield himself to the hand of God and become the saint by a like gradual process, as he ceases to do evil and learns to do well.

A Sad Truth. Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign. It seems that he began to do evil at that early age, and kept on doing evil for many, many years. It was only after a life of evil doing that he repented. He was pardoned then, but he could not undo the evil he had wrought. He could not undo the effects of sin upon his own self. But Manasseh had not marked his soul alone. Sin never does stop with the sinner. He had led Judah away from loyalty to God. Do you think that one can live a life of sin and it will not matter if only he repents and is forgiven at the last? It will matter, both to himself and to others. Repentance can not undo the evil that has been wrought; it can not do the good that has not been wrought; it can not bring back the wasted days that they may be lived over and filled with righteous deeds.

Counsel to Boys and Girls. There is a great deal of good in every one of you. The question only is how to get it out of you, so that it may be of service to yourselves and others. You are all of you like so many blocks of marble. Inside every block of marble there is a beautiful statue. What does a sculptor do when he wants to carve a figure out of stone? He takes his big block, and he cuts a bit away here and chips a bit away there, not too much, not too little, but just enough, and when he has got rid of all he doesn't

want, and filed and smoothed away all the rough little bits and the sharp little bits—there is the statue. So it is with you. There is a lovely character hidden away in each of you—it only wants drawing forth. Parents and teachers have to do much of the rough hewing and chipping away—which indeed in your unwisdom you sometimes complain of as being "rather rough on" you, though, by and by, when you are older and wiser, you will rejoice at the result. But the chief part of the task must be *yours; you* must work at removing all that is evil, at bringing out and polishing and perfecting all that is good in you. Never has there been a truly good man who has not done the greater part of this work, requiring infinite patience and perseverance, for himself, and done it while he was yet young; because it is the doings of the child that decide whether his whole life-work will be pure and right.

Therefore, my advice to you is this: Accustom yourselves early to chip away from your own characters bits of selfishness, greed, indolence, ill temper, cruelty, cowardice, meanness, and whatever else hides the good which I am sure is in you. Also accustom yourselves early to use in the best possible way all the gifts and opportunities with which God has blessed you. *Simeon Singer,* in *Sermons to Children.*

III Missionary Topic Worse than the Heathen

Sinning against Light. The prophetical writers often speak of the idolatrous practices of the people with the greatest scorn. They point out how much Jehovah had done for His people, how He had saved them from slavery in Egypt, how He had brought them to the promised land, how He had destroyed the nations before them in that land, how He had promised them great blessings if they only remained faithful to Him. But they forsook God who loved and cared for them, and turned to worship sticks and stones, senseless things that they had made with their own hands. The folly of it! Folly was it for the heathen nations around them who knew not the Lord, but shame as well as folly was it for God's chosen people. For My people have committed two evils, is the word of the Lord through Jeremiah: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. This was the senseless sin of Manasseh.

No Chinese swears about his Gods. It is well occasionally to compare ourselves with the heathen and see whether we, with all our light, are doing in any of our practices worse than they with all their darkness.

An American woman who had been a missionary in China for several years was once talking in a railway station with an educated Chinaman who had come to this country to study our ways. Seeing a look of pain cross his face, she asked what was the matter. "Oh, did you not hear that man swear?" he asked. "I had not noticed the oaths," she says, "but I blushed with shame for the American as the Chinaman exclaimed: 'In all my life, in my China, I never heard a heathen man swear about his gods. He is worse than the heathen!'"

Are we Fit to have an Interest in Missions? At the last Student Volunteer Convention the chairman, Dr. John R. Mott, said quickly, in a few opening words, that the object of the convention was the making of Jesus Christ known to the world. Then he introduced Mr. George Sherwood Eddy, of India, who, he said, would speak on the theme, "Is Our Christianity Worth Propagating?" Not, "is Christianity worth propagating?" but our Christianity. Christianity is not on trial, nor is it under discussion. Our Christianity is: the kind of Christianity that we have in our North American colleges to-day. Has that any message to a lost world? Have I a salvation that is worth passing on? Have I a power—power for victory over sin—in my own life? And from those opening questions the speaker went on to search out, and probe, and cut deep down into, the lives of his listeners. He confronted them with a series of personal questions that were hard to answer, tests that were hard to measure up to, yet without the meeting of which no one has any right to presume to offer help to those who need Christ.

The enthusiastic delegates had forgotten a little of their eagerness to be told how the heathen world needed them, and were thinking seriously, soberly, as the speaker concluded.

After a period of silent prayer, in absolute stillness broken only by searching

questions that Mr. Eddy directed to the hearts of those who were praying, the chairman introduced Mr. Robert E. Speer, to speak on the theme, "The Abounding Sufficiency of Jesus Christ to meet the Needs of All Men." Mr. Speer's familiarity with the foreign fields was well known, and now the audience settled back to hear what they believed would be a masterly presentation of the inadequacy of the ethnic religions, the unmet needs of those who were living in them, and Christ's unique power to meet the soul-hunger of those peoples. But listen: "It does not matter what the needs are with which we have come to this convention: our Lord Jesus Christ is able to satisfy them." There it was again; the speaker was cutting directly into the personal life of his hearers. He assumed that they had needs which were unmet, and which were quite as vital as those of the heathen world. And his listeners knew that he was right. *Sunday School Times.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

The penalty of rejecting the fuller light is that you sink lower than do those who never had that light. *W. L. Watkinson.*

Sin, and you may be forgiven, but you shall never so long as your life lasts be able to count on freedom from the consequences. *George Adam Smith.*

Humility is always a precursor of pardon. *R. Bruce Taylor.*

Turn you at my reproof. Prov. 1.23.

The young who are beginning this business of life need to be willing to learn, to listen humbly to warning and advice. *Hugh Black.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Manasseh would not heed divine warnings. Is it not the very sin of sins, and the climax of suicidal folly, that God should call and men stop their ears? And yet how many of us pay no more regard to His voice in His providences, in our own consciences, in history, in Scripture, and in Christ, than to idle wind whistling through an archway! *Alexander Maclaren.*

The time to learn to do well is in our youth, for we need many years of time in which to practice the doing so as to learn it well. To learn the art we must have a pattern to follow. Learn of Me, says the Master Teacher.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Superstitious practices of to-day.
2. Character versus Circumstances.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Who followed Manasseh as king of Judah, and what can you tell about his reign? (2 Ch. 33.21-25.) 2. Read the account of Josiah's reign in 2 K. 22.1-7; 23.4-20. 3. What was the condition in Assyria at this time? (Clipping, p. 292.) 4. What prophet encouraged Josiah in the thirteenth year of his reign? (Jer. 1.1, 2.) 5. Where did he obtain the bones of the priests, v. 5? (2 K. 23.13-20.) 6. Why did he burn them? (Clipping, p. 292.) 7. Who was Shaphan? (2 K. 22.3.) 8. What did the Levites who were skilled musicians accomplish? (Clipping, p. 291.)

Questions to think about. 1. Who was the last good king of Judah and what was the relationship between him and Josiah? 2. How can you explain the fact that Josiah was so different from his father and his grandfather? 3. What other boy king ruled in Judah and how did he come to the throne? (Lesson 3, Second Quarter.) 4. What resemblances in the life of Joash and Josiah? 5. How was Josiah a better king than Joash? (2 Ch. 24.17-19.) 6. What does the second verse mean? 7. Why did Josiah so utterly destroy the images? 8. What great leader of the Israelites turned images into dust? 12. What reasons can you give why every one should begin to serve God at an early age? 13. What reasons can you give for loyalty to the house of God to-day?

Note-book Work. 1. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of Manasseh's reign. 2. What does our church need and what may we as a class do for it? Write your answer, and bring it to class next week.

LESSON IV—JULY 23

JOSIAH'S DEVOTION TO GOD

Golden Text

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Eccl. 12.1.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 34.1-13. Josiah's Devotion to God. **T.** 2 Chron. 14.1-15. The Devotion of Asa. **W.** 2 Chron. 17.1-13. The Devotion of Jehoshaphat. **T.** 2 Chron. 29.1-11. The Devotion of Hezekiah. **F.** Dan. 1.1-21. The Devotion of Daniel and his Friends. **S.** Dan. 3.1-30. The Devotion of Three Israelites. **S.** Neh. 1.1; 2.20. The Devotion of Nehemiah. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 34.1-13 COMMIT vv. 1, 2

1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images. 4 And they brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images that were on high above them he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves *of them* that had sacrificed unto them. 5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. 6 And so did he in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their ruins round about. 7 And he brake down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the graven images into powder, and hewed down all the sun-images throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem.

8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of Jehovah his God. 9 And they came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 And they delivered it into the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah; and the workmen that wrought in the house of Jehovah gave it to mend and repair the house: 11 even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12 And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and *others of* the Levites, all that were skilful with instruments of music. 13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all that did the work in every manner of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-13. See 2 K. 22.1-7; 23.4-20.

1. *Josiah was eight years old.* "At the age of eight he was chiefly under the care of the women of the household; and through them, or some of his ministers

or some of the priests, his character, on which so much depended, was moulded by the principles of his great-grandfather, Hezekiah" (*George Adam Smith*).

2. *Turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.* See Dt. 5.32.

3. *While he was yet young.* He was now sixteen: before this others had doubtless governed in his name.—*His father.* His ancestor.—*In the twelfth year.* When he was twenty years old. In the thirteenth year the prophet Jeremiah came to his aid, Jer. 1.1, 2.—*High places and the Asherim.* See p. 71.—*To purge.* To make ceremonially clean.

4. *The Baalim.* Plural of Baal.—*In his presence.* Under his personal supervision.—*The sun-images.* Manasseh instituted the worship of the host of heaven, last lesson. See 2 K. 23.11.—*Brake in pieces.* See 2 K. 23.4-14.—*Made dust of them.* As Moses did with the golden calves, Ex. 32.20.—*Strewed it upon the graves.* "As if he said, there you lie together, pounded idols and dead worshippers, neither able to help the other!" (*Maclaren.*)

5. *Burnt the bones of the priests upon the altars.* The bones were taken from near-by burial places: see 2 K. 23.13-20 and p. 292.

6. *In the cities of Manasseh...even unto Naphtali.* The Assyrian power now was waning, and Judah evidently had some sort of control over the cities of the former northern kingdom, where there were some Israelites as well as the foreign people whom the kings of Assyria had brought there.—*In their ruins round about.* The cities had been destroyed by the Assyrians. Or, as otherwise read, *with their axes:* the Hebrew is obscure, RVm.

8. *Now in the eighteenth year of his reign.* Read 2 K. 22.3-20.—*Shaphan.* A scribe, 2 K. 22.3. "The secretary of state."—*The recorder.* Or, *chronicler,* RVm. "The official historian."

9. *Delivered the money.* It had evidently been collected during a somewhat long period.—*The keepers of the threshold.* The Levitical door keepers.—*And of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* Another reading is, *and they returned to Jerusalem,* RVm.

10. *The workmen.* Evidently these were contractors or overseers, for they are distinguished from the carpenters and builders, v. 11.

11. *Couplings.* Beams.—*The houses.* The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, 1 Ch. 28.11.—*The kings of Judah had destroyed.* By their neglect to keep it in repair, and also by their giving the temple over to the worship of the Baalim, 2 Ch. 33.4-7.

12. *Sons of Merari.* Merari was the son of Levi, to whom a division of the Levites traced their descent.—*The Kohathites.* Descendants of Kohath, another son of Levi.—*To set it forward.* Or, *to preside over it,* RVm. These overseers saw to the progress of the work.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

5. *He purged Judah and Jerusalem.* The heathen cults may have ceased for the rest of Josiah's reign, but upon his death they immediately revived. But the centralization of the national worship of Jehovah, the establishment of the one sanctuary for the One God, was settled once for all. Whether cleansed or not from heathen cults, Jerusalem became, not merely the principal school and shrine of the one great system of ethical and intellectual monotheism in the ancient world, but its material sign and sacrament, its only altar, and for centuries almost an equal object with its God of confidence and longing. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

12. *All that were skilful with instruments of music.* It is fabled of Orpheus, a most celebrated musician, that such was the enchanting harmony of his lyre, that he built the city of Thebes by it: the stones and timbers danced to his melody; and by the power of his harmony rose up, and took their respective places in the different parts of the wall that was to defend the city. This is fable; but as all fable is a representation of truth, where is the truth and fact to which this refers? Among the books that have been discovered in the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii is a Greek Treatise on Music by Philodemus; and here we have the truth represented which lay hidden under the fables of Orpheus and Amphion. This latter was a skilful harper, who was frequently employed by the Theban workmen to play to them while en-

gaged in their labor, and for which they rewarded him out of the proceeds of that labor. So powerful and pleasing was his music, that they went lightly and comfortably through their work; and time and labor passed on without fatigue; and the walls and towers were speedily raised. This, by a metaphor, was attributed to the dulcet sounds of his harp; and poetry seized on and embellished it, and mythology incorporated it with her fabulous system. May we not suppose, then, that skilful musicians among the Levites did exercise their art among the workmen who were employed in the repairs of the house of the Lord? *Adam Clarke,* in *Second Chronicles.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

5. *He burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars.* Two reasons led him to do this. The people would deem the idolatrous altars defiled and would turn with horror from worshipping there again, and the act would be considered as a warning to the living priests of Baal, for it was believed that spirits after death were affected by the treatment given the bodies.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon, who followed the evil practices of his father before his reformation. After two years Amon was slain by his court officials, who in turn were put to death by the people, and his son Josiah was placed on the throne.

In "The Kings and Prophets of Israel," Professor Kent thus describes the situation during Josiah's reign: "The accession of the young king Josiah, in 639 B. C., marks an important transition in the history of Judah. The beginning of his reign witnessed the passing of the authority of Assyria, and its close the appearance of the new world power, the Chaldeans, on the horizon of southwestern Asia. His reign was during the calm between the two great wars of foreign invasion. In the inner life of Judah it was also a period of supreme importance, for it witnessed the temporary overthrow of the teachings of the great prophets of the Assyrian period. Under his benign rule there suddenly arose a remarkable group of priests and prophets who left their stamp upon Israel's religion and prepared the nation for the painful and trying experiences of the Babylonian exile.

"In Josiah's youthful training is probably to be found the explanation of his remarkable character and work. The probabilities strongly support the conclusion that his youthful teacher was the prophet Zephaniah, whose sermons roused the nation, as well as the young king. The stern, uncompromising spirit, which characterizes the prophet's reform sermons, is reflected in the extreme measures adopted later by Josiah. Jeremiah must have been born during the closing years of Manasseh's reign, and was therefore a contemporary of king Josiah and of the royal prophet Zephaniah. In the light of the narrative of Kings it is evident that Zephaniah and Jeremiah did not stand alone in their efforts for reform. Hilkiah, the priest, was in full sympathy with the new movement. And Josiah had gathered about him a group of able officers who supported him in his reform measures."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Judah, Jerusalem and the temple, and cities in the former northern kingdom are mentioned. Though Simeon was south of Judah it is mentioned with the tribal lands on the north as in 15.9. See map, p. 65, where the location of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, Naphtali are also shown.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

"Tender twigs are bent with ease,
Aged trees do break with bending."

The conscience of a child is tender, the will of a child has not become accustomed to make wrong choices; in this lesson you have an opportunity to

teach your pupils that it is their duty and privilege to serve God during their whole life, and an opportunity to lead their wills to make the right choice.

Review briefly the lesson about the earlier boy king Joash (Lesson 3, last quarter), and show how he and Josiah alike served God in their youth. Explain how eager Josiah was both to serve God himself and to have all his people give up their idols and worship God. Teach the first topic. If your pupils are boys, have them learn the stanza on p. 294.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. In this picture gallery of the Old Testament we have big and small canvases. We have ruge pictures that immediately arrest our attention, and we have also miniatures, just little sketches—a few sentences—and yet if we study these miniatures closely we may see a good deal of meaning and worth in them. Now let us see if we can find the five things which are told about King Josiah in the first two verses of our lesson.

The first of them is this, that he made an early start. What tells us this? The duties of a king were laid upon him when he was quite a young boy. What is the second fact? He had a very long reign. You know some of your companions who make a very good start when they are running a race; they are good at the first, but they cannot keep it up. There are many people who are good at a sprint in their religious life, but do not keep it up. Josiah made an early start and kept it up from the beginning to the very end. What is the third thing that we read about Josiah? He knew that there was a great Spectator present at the race who had His eye upon him, even God. He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He knew that God was near, and was watching, and that, no doubt, helped him in many an hour of trial, and strengthened him for many a burden of duty. What is the fourth thing that we are told about him? He followed a good leader. David had run that race before him, and had run that race well, and in him Josiah followed a good example. How one lives depends very much on what examples one chooses to follow. And the last fact shown in this miniature of Josiah is what? He kept a straight course; he turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. God had called him to be king, and he was a good king from the very beginning to the very end, allowing nothing to turn him aside. *Adapted from a Talk to Boys and Girls by Alfred E. Garvie.*

For Older Pupils. The Hon. Daines Barrington has given an interesting account of his experiments with birds in his work on "Philosophical Transactions." "I have educated nesting linnets under the three best singing larks, the skylark, woodlark, and titlark, every one of which, instead of the linnet's song, adhered entirely to that of their respective instructor. When the note of the titlark linnet was thoroughly fixed, I hung the bird, for a quarter of a year, in a room with two common linnets which were in full song; the titlark linnet, however, did not borrow any note from the linnet's song, but adhered steadfastly to that of the titlark."

Birds and folks are alike, then, in this, that if they are taught early enough, whatever their native tendencies, they may learn the right notes to which they will adhere through life. Naturally one would expect Josiah to be an idolater like his father Amon and grandfather Manasseh, but while he was yet young he learned to know the true God and he was never afterwards led astray.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth

In the Days of Youth. What a contrast between the records of the two boy kings of Judah, Manasseh and Josiah! Manasseh, the son of the good king Hezekiah, ascended the throne at the age of twelve and reigned long and badly. He was the worst of idolaters, following after every false god and scorning all the warnings of the prophets. Josiah, the son of the wicked king Amon and grandson of wicked Manasseh, became king at the age of eight, and despite the evil influences that surrounded him was a true follower of the Lord and battled manfully for His cause. The trend of each life began in boy-

hood. Go through the woods and note the crooked and dwarfed trees there. They did not grow up straight and tall for a season and then change to their present condition; something gave the crook to the tree or stopped its sturdiness early in its life. The spiritual life of human beings is much like the natural life of trees: it is in boyhood and girlhood that the trend is given to character which will make it strong and upright.

In a recent sermon Dr. W. L. Watkinson said he had a friend who was famous as an exhibitor of prize flowers, but when he paid him a visit a few weeks before a great exhibition was to take place he was surprised to find that his friend was paying little attention to his plants. When Mr. Watkinson expressed his surprise, his friend replied that he had given his undivided attention to the flowers ten months earlier, and that he was almost sure of seeing his name at the head of the prize-list. "If you were adults," the great preacher said to the children he was addressing, "I should point the moral, but you are intellectually alert enough to see that if you are careful in your life now, by and by you will bear the beautiful flower and the ripe fruit of a noble life, which at the end of the days the King will gather into His celestial garden."

Children are not too Young to know their Creator. Suppose some one said to you about your father: "You are too young to think anything about him; you must wait till you grow up before you understand who he is, what he thinks of you, what he does for you;" what would you say to that? You would say: "Nonsense! I may be only a little child, but I know my father, and I love him, and I understand him when he talks to me." Of course you do; you understand him, you know who he is; and just so you can understand that greater Father, whose child you are,—your Father who is in heaven. *Charles Cuthbert Hall,* in *The Silver Cup.*

A Boy's Prayer.

God who created me
  Nimble and light of limb,
In three elements free,
  To run, to ride, to swim;
Not when the sense is dim
  But now from the heart of joy
I would remember Him:
  Take the thanks of a boy. *H. C. Beaching.*

II No Compromise with Sin

A Clean Sweep. We have heard of so many kings of Judah who partly followed the Lord, trying to worship both God and Baal, or who began to worship God and then turned to idolatry, that it is with delight that we read the history of Josiah and find that he wholly followed the Lord, that throughout his entire life he swerved not from the straight path, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, but "looked inward, looked forward, and looked upward." The reformation which he began he carried out, his duty to God and to his kingdom he fulfilled.

Back in Genesis we read that the people with him gave unto Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. Jacob did not break the idols and pound them to dust and scatter the dust about; he was not willing to part with them wholly, he was a double-dealer by nature, and he merely put his idols out of sight. Such compromising with idolatry was the sin of Jacob's descendants. Such compromising with evil is the sin of people to-day. We must not only turn from sin but wholly turn from it. "Some of our gods may seem innocent, some beautiful, some valuable, some linked with tender memories, but all must go, absolutely and finally."

The wire which brings into your house a heavy current of electricity to light it is put where no one can reach it. If you should mount upon a ladder so that you could touch it with one hand you would instantly fall, yet the birds alight upon it and stay there and no harm comes to them. Why is this? It is your connection with the earth that would cause your destruction, for through your body the current would run down the ladder to the earth: the birds rest

wholly upon the wire and are safe. It is trying to compromise with evil, trying to serve both God and mammon, that is one's undoing.

A Straight Path. In the time of Cyprian it was customary to keep a boy on guard in the vineyards when the grapes began to ripen. He looked out from his small tower and watched the paths that led through the vineyard, and when he saw a traveler step to the left or right to pick the grapes he called out his warning: Keep straight on, traveler: stay on your path. So to the pilgrim on life's way the warning comes: keep straight on, turn not to the right hand nor to the left, but wholly follow the Lord.

"Men, do you mean business?" Professor Drummond used to ask the sixteen hundred students whom he addressed on Sunday evenings: "Is your religion to be a business, or a toy? If you are going to play with it, I pray you, drop it. If you mean business, put out your hand and grasp God's, and then mean business all your life."

Wholly following the Lord. One reason why the great mass of professing Christians make so little of their religion is because they are only half-hearted in it. If you divide a river into two streams the force of each is less than half the power of the original current, and the chances are that you will make a stagnant marsh where there used to be a flowing stream. A man that puts only half himself in his profession or trade, while the other half of his wits is gone wool-gathering and dreaming, is predestined to fail. The same is true about religion. If you and I attend to it as a kind of by-occupation; if we give the balance of our time and the superfluity of our energy, after we have done a hard day's work—say, an hour upon a Sunday—to seeking God, and devote all the rest of the week to seeking worldly prosperity, it is no wonder if our religion languishes, and is mainly a matter of forms. Oh! I do believe there is more unconscious unreality in the average Christian's endeavor to be a better Christian than there is in almost anything else in the world.

To seek the Lord wholly does not mean that there are to be no other desires, for it is a great mistake to pit religion against other things which are meant to be its instruments and its helps. God demands no impossible and fantastic detachment of ourselves from the ordinary and legitimate occupations, affections, and duties of human life, but He does ask that the dominant desire after Him should be powerful enough to express itself through our actions, and that we should seek for God in them, and for them in God. *Alexander Maclaren* in *Expositions of Scripture.*

III Loyalty to the House of God

Temple and Church should be Worthy of God. Josiah's zeal in destroying the idols and heathen altars was next expended in repairing the temple. It is interesting to keep in mind that the king was only sixteen years old when he began to show his zeal for the worship of the true God, and only twenty-six years of age when he turned his attention to the repair of God's house. The repairs that were called for show how completely the temple had been neglected and abused. Probably there was not a bit of the gold that was not black with smoke, the cedar beams had rotted away, the stones had fallen, everything was covered with dust and dirt. Under Josiah's leadership the temple was restored to its fitting order and beauty.

The building in which we worship is not the one rallying-place of all true followers of the Lord; it has not the sacred associations of the olden temple, nor has it wonderful patriotic and historical interests, but it is the place where we meet to worship the same God who is from everlasting to everlasting. It should be a worthy meeting-house. Those who dwell in palaces of cedar should, like David, be unwilling to worship in a tent of cloth. There should not be such disparity between what we lavish on ourselves and what we give to God. But whether the house of God where we worship is temple or tent, we should love it as the place where we find God always.

They could not afford to give Anything to God's House. A man who attempted to raise some money on a subscription paper for a necessary church out West relates his experience thus:

"The first man I met said he was very sorry, but the fact was, he was so involved in his business that he couldn't give anything. Very sorry, but a man

in debt as he was owed his first duty to his creditors. He was smoking an expensive cigar, and before I left his store he bought of a pedler who came in a pair of expensive Rocky Mountain cuff-buttons.

The next man I went to was a young clerk in a banking establishment. He read the paper over, acknowledged that the church was needed, but said he was owing for his board, was badly in debt, and did not see how he could give anything. That afternoon, as I went by the base-ball grounds, I saw this young man pay fifty cents at the entrance to go in, and saw him mount the grand stand where special seats were sold for a quarter of a dollar.

The third man to whom I presented the paper was a farmer living near the town. He also was sorry, but times were hard, his crops had been a partial failure, the mortgage on his farm was a heavy load, the interest was coming due, and he really could not see his way clear to give to the church, although it was just what the new town needed. A week from that time I saw that same farmer drive into town with his entire family, and go to the circus, afternoon and night, at an expense of at least four dollars.

The Bible says, "Judge not that ye be not judged," but it says also, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And I really could not help thinking that the devil could use that old sentence, "in debt" to splendid advantage, especially when he had a selfish man to help him. *The Youth's Companion.*

What Loyalty to God's House means. The temple was to all the Israelites the very dwelling-place of God, and all the offerings which they gave for the temple and its furnishings were thought of as given directly to Him. So our houses of worship to-day are His dwelling-place. Well says Gypsy Smith: "St. Paul's Cathedral is nothing but a glorified quarry if Christ be out of it, and my old gypsy tent is a cathedral when Christ is in it."

But the home, the school, the workshop, the place of business is God's dwelling-place as well as the church. Loyalty to God's house means loyalty to Him wherever we are. Dr. David H. Greer has impressed this thought in "From Things to God": What those people in that old time tried to do in their way, you and I and all of us should try to do in ours. We are not merely to build houses of worship for God. We are to build factories, and warehouses, and produce exchanges, and railways, and shops, and banks, for God. Or rather, we are to see and feel that these and the activities they represent, our industrial works and employments in connection with them, our social and professional engagements, our buying and selling of goods, our practicing of medicine, our arguing of cases in court, our going out to parties and evening receptions, our meeting together in club-houses—to see and to feel that the whole of our complex and growing civilization, our diversified social life with all its varied equipment, is not our temple merely—to contribute to our comfort and to minister to our pride—but something very much more. We should recognize the fact that our manifold civilization is chiefly the temple of God—that the purpose of God is in it, pervades it. Certainly we cannot be wrong in thinking that it is God's purpose to make this world His dwelling-place, and that it is His joy and should also be our task to help to make it such. That, it seems to me, is what you and I are here for.

SENTENCE SERMONS

Let no man despise thy youth. 1 Tim. 4.12.

I cannot remember the time when I had not intense yearnings after God. *Evangeline Booth.*

As Christ knocks at the door of your heart, offering you a career of service, open to Him willingly. *Hugh Black.*

Compromise has no place with a noble conscience. *W. L. Watkinson.*

Most of the difficulties of trying to live the Christian life arise from attempting to half live it. *Henry Drummond.*

To take the great gift of youth thoughtlessly and selfishly, merely as a gift with no thought of it as an opportunity, is really to throw away the boon and despise it as worthless. *Hugh Black.*

Our lives must be full of music if we are to lay even one stone in the temple. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days

of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment. Eccl. 11.9.

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And even when he is old he will not depart from it. Prov. 22.6.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

We should be loyal to our own church, glad to bring our money to it, but while loving our church home best we should be on friendly terms and in sympathy with those who have other church homes.

"What kind of church would our church be,
If every member were just like me?"

Can we not make this prayer of consecration ours, which Charles Haddon Spurgeon made when he was a lad: O great and unsearchable God, with a humble dependence upon the support of Thy Holy Spirit, I yield up myself to Thee: I would be forever, unreservedly Thine.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

Josiah became king of Judah when eight years of age, and during his reign of thirty-one years he wholly followed the Lord. When sixteen years of age his loyalty to God began to be very marked. When twenty years of age he began his active work of reform in his kingdom, clearing out all the idols, destroying the idolatrous places of worship, breaking up the graven images, pounding them to dust and scattering the dust upon the graves of idolaters, and even in his zeal digging up the bones of priests of Baal and burning them upon the Baal altars. These reform measures he carried out also in the now desolate cities of northern Israel.

When twenty-six years of age King Josiah turned his attention to the ruined temple and repaired it. He placed the governor of Jerusalem, the official secretary and the official historian in charge, and they handed over to Hilkiah, the high priest, the money which had been brought by the people to the house of God and given into the charge of the Levites appointed to receive it. The oversight of the work was in charge of men appointed; the men who did the work of repairing the temple were faithful. The overseers were Levites, other Levites encouraged the workmen with music, yet other Levites were scribes and officers and porters. The work progressed rapidly.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Constructive work must follow destructive work.
2. Children and the Church.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the entire 34th chapter of 2 Ch. and 2 K. 22. 1-33.30. 2. Read Dt. 12-26 and imagine the feelings of Josiah on hearing these words read. 3. What was the result of the finding of the book of the Law? 4. What is further recorded in regard to Josiah? (Chapter 35.) 5. What period of history is covered by Second Chronicles?

Questions to think about. 1. What is meant by the money brought into the house of Jehovah, v. 14? (See v. 9.) 2. What was the book of the Law? (Clipping, p. 299.) 3. What was the appearance of the "book"? (Clipping, p. 300.) 4. Why did the king rend his clothes? 5. What is meant by making a covenant before Jehovah, v. 31? 6. What is meant by "stand to it"; v. 32? 7. In what earlier lesson did we hear about the book of the Law being taught? (2 Ch. 17.7-9.) 8. How may the Bible be lost to-day? 9. Do you really possess your Bible? 10. How much of it is "hidden in your heart"?

Note-book and Memory Work. 1. Commit to memory Dt. 10.12, 13 and Ps. 119.2. 2. In your Book of the kings of Judah write an account of "Josiah's Devotion to God." 3. Make an outline of Second Chronicles.

LESSON V—JULY 30

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW

Golden Text

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Ps. 119.11.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 2 Chron. 34.14-33. The Finding of the book of the Law. **T.** Deut. 28.1-19. The Blessings and the Cursings of the Law. **W.** 2 Chron. 34.29-33; 2 Kings 23.1-3. Making a Covenant before the Lord. **T.** Chron. 35.1-19. Celebrating the Passover. **F.** 2 Kings 23.4-20. Destroying the High Places. **S.** 2 Kings 23.24-27. No King before that Turned like him to the Lord. **S.** 2 Chron. 35.20-27; 2 Kings 23.28-30. Josiah Lamented by All Israel. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT 2 Chron. 34.14-33 PRINT vv. 14-21, 29-33 COMMIT v. 21

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah *given* by Moses. 15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing. 17 And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Jehovah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen. 18 And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read therein before the king. 19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. 20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, 21 Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah. 31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. 32 And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it.* And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

Read the entire chapter and 2 K. 22.1-23.30.

14. *The money that was brought into the house of Jehovah.* V. 9.—*The*

book of the law. When the book was written, why it became lost, what knowledge of the law was held before its discovery, it is useless for Sunday-school instruction to inquire. It was probably part, at least, of the Book of Deuteronomy, which calls itself the Book of the Law, the Book of the Covenant. Dr. George Adam Smith points out that it is precisely from this time onward that the style and phraseology which are characteristic of Deuteronomy begin to affect the literature of Israel. See below.—*Given by.* Heb. *by the hand of,* RVm.

15. *Answered.* No question is recorded, but this verb is often used when the answer is to unexpressed thoughts.—*I have found the book of the law.* Probably in the holy of holies, Dt. 31.26.—*The scribe.* Whose duty it was to have the book copied when necessary.

16. *Moreover brought back word.* He was going to the king with a report concerning the progress of the work, and took the book with him.

17. *Emptied out.* Or, *poured out,* RVm. From the chest into bags, 2 K. 22.9.

18. *Read therein.* Read it, the entire roll, according to 2 K. 22.10.

19. *He rent his clothes.* In token of his grief and fear on learning what the law required and what was the punishment for the disobedience of which he and the nation had been guilty, v. 21.

A Scribe Reading

20. The commission appointed by Josiah to seek information from the prophets, v. 22, whether the impending wrath could be arrested.—*Ahikam.* Who protected Jeremiah, Jer. 26.24.—*Abdon.* Achbor in 2 K. 22.12.—*Because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah.* The cause of his anxiety.

22. *Huldah the prophetess.* Jeremiah the prophet had not yet become prominent, and he was probably farther off, his native place being Anathoth.—*Second quarter.* "Apparently the fore city enclosed by the second wall."—*To that effect.* See v. 21.

23-28. Huldah the prophetess warns them that the consequences cannot be averted, but assures them that because the king has humbled himself the punishment shall not be meted out during his reign.

29-33. Compare 2 K. 23.1-3.

30. *Both great and small.* It was a representative assembly that the king called together.—*He read.* He caused to be read by the priest, Dt. 31.7-11.—*Book of the covenant.* Part, at least, of Deuteronomy.

31. *Made a covenant.* Compare Hezekiah's atonement, 2 Ch. 29.20-24.—*Before Jehovah.* As if in the presence of Jehovah.—*To walk after Jehovah.* Compare Dt. 10.12, 13.

32. *To stand to it.* Signifying their willingness to obey, probably by arising.

33. Read the fuller account of Josiah's reformation in 2 K. 23.4-20.—*All his days.* In the reign of his son, Jehoiakim, the Baalim were again worshipped.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

15. *The book of the law.* It was what we now call Deuteronomy. That book had never been seen nor used among the Jews before; from this time on it was the law book which guided the affairs of the nation, and, especially, its religion. Nobody knows how it came to be hidden away in the temple. Nobody knows who wrote it. Most likely the book contains the rules and teachings that God put into the hearts of pious men among the priests to work out through a course of years. But all these things were so directly contrary to idol-worship and witchcraft and the other vile practices that used to go on in Jerusalem under the name of religion that anybody who had brought the book forward during the reign of the preceding king would have been seized as a traitor and stoned or burned. So it was hidden for safety till in better

times it might be brought to light. Perhaps the man who had hidden it was dead, perhaps he was afraid to speak. At all events we must believe that Hilkiah was honest, for he helped to set on foot a noble reformation. *W. F. Adeney,* in *Biblical World.*

15. *I have found the book of the law.* Up! explorers, with pick and spade, pursue your investigations in ancient lands that bricks and monuments may confirm, as thus far they have done, God's Holy Word. Up! scholars, search, explore, and translate all documents that verify the sources of our faith. Up! saintly men and women, and bring your experience to the judgment-seat, that the marvel-working power of the Sacred Book may be proclaimed. Up! all who love humanity, and would have it feel the influence that proceeds from the truth of God, and demand that it shall be freed from every bond that binds. Then the recovered Bible shall, like the Spirit dispelling at the beginning the chaotic void and darkness, breathe on the world anew the inspiration which leads to light, order, and the triumph of the good. *George C. Lorimer.*

19. *He rent his clothes.* To realize the effect of the reading of the book upon the susceptible soul of Josiah we must read it ourselves, that is, read over Dt. xii-xxvi, and imagine what a pious king in old Jerusalem must have felt in hearing for the first time a divine revelation of such tremendous import. The book contained implicit directions as to worship and conduct, and as the penalty of national disobedience decreed the loss of home and country, the sentence of the offenders was accumulative. For many generations warnings and precepts had been alike neglected, and when the day of doom should come, the sins of the fathers also would be visited upon the children. Could the doom be averted by speedy and complete obedience and penitence? *J. F. McCurdy,* in *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

14. *The book.* Our word *volume* comes from the Latin noun *volumen,* meaning a roll of writing, formed from the Latin verb *volvere,* to *roll.* Sheets of papyrus, and later of parchment, were joined together so as to form one continuous sheet, and then rolled upon a staff into a volume. The book found in the temple was such a volume or scroll. Similar scrolls are used to-day in Jewish synagogues.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Last week we left King Josiah in the midst of his great reforms. In taking the money brought to the temple for its repair and in clearing out the neglected building, the book of the Law was found, the subject of our lesson to-day. The celebrating in the temple of a great passover followed.

The Assyrian power, as we have seen, (p. 292) was meanwhile waning and a new foe loomed on the horizon, the Scythians of Armenia and Asia Minor, allies of the Assyrians. About 625 B. C. a great horde came down the Mediterranean shore on their way to Egypt and filled the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah with terror, as their addresses show. They did not, however, attack Judah. Josiah seems to have had some sort of control over Samaria as well as Judah, and when Necho, king of Egypt, was at Megiddo in the southwestern part of the Plain of Esdraelon with a huge army, Josiah went to meet him and there was slain.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Very impressive is the scene in this lesson. Study it till you catch its spirit and can make your pupils see it. In telling the story give in dialogue form the words between Hilkiah and Shaphan, Shaphan and Josiah, Hilkiah and Huldah, Josiah and the great assembly at Jerusalem.

Teach the third Topic, not failing to tell your pupils about that mission Sunday-school, p. 304. Encourage them to learn by heart not only the Golden Text each week but other verses and "Sentence Sermons" which you select.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger and Older Pupils. Adoniram Judson, the American missionary in Burma, had translated the Bible into the Burmese language when war was waged between Burma and England, and he was put in prison suspected of being a spy for England. Terrible were his sufferings at this time, for he was bound for nineteen months with three sets of fetters (part of the time with five) and confined in a loathsome cell. Mrs. Judson, knowing that the precious manuscript would be found and seized in her home at first buried it, and then fearing that it would decay if left longer in the ground, she wrapped it about with cotton and made it into a pillow for her husband in his cell. Once it was stolen by the soldiers from the cell, but Mrs. Judson redeemed it by giving them a better one. Then one night Dr. Judson was hurried off to a distant prison and his pillow was thrown out into the prison yard. There one of his faithful converts found it and took it home, because it had belonged to his loved teacher.

Dr. Judson mourned for his lost Bible, but long afterwards to his great joy he found it uninjured in the house of his convert. Is it not wonderful that this book was saved? Dr. Judson lived to see thousands reading it and keeping its laws. The earliest account of a lost and found Bible (Book of the Law) is given in both Second Chronicles and Second Kings.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Lost Bibles

Lost through Neglect. We expected to inherit our father's triumphant faith in God, his firm assurance of the reality of things unseen, his bright hope of heaven, his power of prayer, as easily as we expected to inherit his dollars and his acres. But some day when we wake up to a sense of the fact that it is not so, that we have not inherited these things, we are surprised and almost indignant. Instead of those broad territories of Christian faith in which we have been counting, we find ourselves cramped in a position that hardly gives us room for the soles of our feet—when the time of stress comes, and our easily inherited faith is put to the test and crumbles away from us; when we begin to need most the help of prayer, and find that we never have learned to pray; when we need most a Savior from the awful assault of temptation, and we find we have made no personal acquaintance with any; when we most sorely need the promises of the Holy Book, and find we never have made them ours, and that we do not know even where to look for them between the covers.

That is a common experience, I believe, and comes, sooner or later, to many who have been reared in Christian homes, and it seems very hard to us. But when we begin to speak or to think our complaints over such treatment, the question comes back out of the silence: "Of what are you complaining? What better have you deserved? If there is enough character in you to deserve a more spacious faith, there must be enough to go out and win it." *William R. Richards,* in *For Whom Christ Died.*

Hidden under the Gold Leaf of Human Inventions. The Bible has been made an idol. The Pharisees, as we know, carried about texts from the Bible sewed in the hem of their garments. Protestant Christians have held the doctrines of verbal inspiration. How our great grandfathers used to prick the pages of the Bible in the belief that the text they touched would give them guidance in the difficulties of the day! The people, because the Bible had done such great things, tried to make them seem greater! They did what people so often do, spoiled truth by ornaments. A woman, according to an old tale, had a lovely child. Desiring to make it more lovely, she covered it with gold-leaf and she killed the child. The people in the same way, desiring to honor the Bible, hid it behind the gold-leaf of their own inventions. Modern knowledge, which has scattered these inventions, has not destroyed the Bible. Knowledge is from God; knowledge is fire and light; it burns up falsehood and reveals truth. Under the light, then, of modern knowledge, search the Scriptures. Many writers have put their learning at every one's

disposal. Search the Scriptures and get courage to do God's will in God's way. *S. A. Barnet,* in *Sermon preached at Westminster Abbey.*

Covered with the Rubbish of Wild Interpretations. The old picture of Martin Luther, standing before a copy of the Scriptures carefully chained to a wall in a crypt, is suggestive. The gospel then did not have free course. It was not only bound with iron, but it was sunken from the eyes of the common people in the inexplorable depth of the dead languages. The Roman Church boasts that through the Dark Ages she safely preserved the Word of God. So she did. She kept it securely locked up in an unknown tongue, and fastened by chains in her vaulted chambers. It is her boast that she kept, and it is the higher boast of Protestants that they gave. Wycliff, Tyndale, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Luther, Melanchthon and the Westminster divines found the old book in the temple, rescued it from an enormous rubbish heap of traditions and decrees, and restored it to the world through the magnificent translations which they made. Then modern history began.

The Bible is now partly lost beneath the rubbish of wild interpretations. This dangerous pursuit is not modern and is as old as man's presumption and folly. One writer—and he has many followers—has located the to-be-famed field of Armageddon in the Mississippi Valley, and has demonstrated to his own patriotic satisfaction that the combined forces of Europe are to be defeated there by an indignant and righteous American nation. Others have elaborated abstruse system of symbolisms and correspondences by which we are to make out what the Scriptures teach, not by what they say, but by what the recondite method of determining holds that they ought to say.

The question Christendom has to answer is whether it can afford any longer to have the chief source of its authority and teaching caricatured, which is to all intents and purposes as grave a misdemeanor as to chain it once more to the stone pillar in the vaulted crypt; for in both instances the world is robbed of it as the light of life. *George C. Lorimer,* in *The Recovery of the Lost Revelation.*

II Memorized Bibles

Our Golden Text. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee. About fifty years ago there was a great revival among the German people in southern Russia which led to the conversion of many orthodox Russians: they were given a special name at the time which still clings to them, one which should be appropriate to Christians everywhere. They were called *Stundists,* from the German word *Stunde,* hour or lesson, because they met regularly for the study of the Bible. If the Bible were thoroughly studied, its words hidden in the hearts of Christians, then the latter part of our Golden Text would inevitably follow, they would not sin so often against God. In the days of Christ the most common name for a school was *Beth Hassepher*—the House of the Book—because that part of the Bible which we now call the Old Testament was practically the only subject of study. In the Koran Mohammed usually designates Christians by the phrase "the people of the Book."

People of the Book should we all in truth be, and one cannot begin too early to hide its words in one's heart. An Englishman has recently written his "recollections," and in his seventieth year he tells what chapters, what entire epistles and what other portions of the Bible he committed to memory when seven years of age. Remarkable is it, not only that he learned so much at so early an age, but that throughout his long life he has not forgotten what he then learned. Members of "The Berean Band" pledge themselves to learn at least one verse of the Bible accurately every week. Can we not pledge far more? What will be some of the benefits of this hiding its words in our hearts? This is the answer of the Bishop of Durham: I believe that the presence of all this Bible in the inner mind does tend, by Grace, to sweeten it, like lavender in a linen-chest. And then, in silent and solitary moments, walking by the way, lying awake at night, how beautiful it is to be able to listen to the very voice of God talking out of one's memory into the mind and soul! Ah! What a power it is to warn, to guide, to cheer! Many a moment that would be invaded by sin, or just withered by thoughts of

sorrow, is turned into purity and hope by the verse, the psalm, the chapter, said "by heart," in silence or with sound. Learn your Bible. A "step at a time," a verse a day, or two verses, or ten, as your memory may serve: what a treasure you will gather up ere long! And the Lord of the Word will meet you through the Word, and make your memory His "telephone" for the very voice of Heaven.

Korean Christians know their Bibles. Koreans are Bible-loving Christians. They are great students of the New Testament, and know much of it by heart. One missionary said to me, "I have gone through a theological seminary, but those Koreans know their Testament better than I do." A visitor from the United States was present at one of the Bible examinations. "Well," he said, "I am an elder of the Presbyterian Church in America, but if my membership depended upon answering the questions put to these nations, I should have to stay outside." *Bible in the World.*

Ruskin's Knowledge of the Bible. Mr. E. T. Cook, the editor of Ruskin's Complete Works, speaking at Whitelands College, as reported in *The Christian,* stated that in all Ruskin's writings there are about thirteen thousand Biblical references. He always quoted from memory, and Mr. Cook found only one slip in all the quotations. Alluding to young David, Ruskin speaks of three smooth stones with which the lad went forth to meet Goliath. The number of the stones was five, not three; "but," added Mr. Cook humorously, "the odd two are hardly worth throwing at Ruskin's memory." Ruskin must have committed whole books of the Bible to memory. We need more of this today. Our grandfathers knew their Bibles far better than we do, and this ought not to be.

III Missionary Topic Treasured Bibles

A Buried Bible. When the missionaries of the London Missionary Society first entered Madagascar in the year 1820, they were well received by the king of that country, and before long a number of natives were converted to Christianity. But the king's successor, Queen Ranavalona I., who hated the Christians, issued in March 1835, a decree against them, making even the possession of Christian books punishable by death. Three months later the last missionaries were obliged to leave the country, but not before they had finished printing the Bible in Malagasy and had distributed copies among the native converts. They also buried in the earth, and stored in various other hiding-places, seventy complete Bibles and several cases of New Testaments, Psalters, and other parts of the Bible. These books, which passed stealthily from hand to hand and were read in secret at the peril of the native Christians' lives, became the fuel which kept the sacred fire burning until the missionaries were allowed to return, a quarter of a century later. By that time the little band of Malagasy Christians had actually grown from two hundred to over two thousand.

During the period of persecution one little body of native Christians in a village called Fihaonana, had kept a copy of the Scriptures. On hearing that the queen's officers were coming to search the village they held an anxious consultation to decide upon some secret place in which their Bible might be safely hidden; "for," they said, "if we lose our Bible what will we do?"

A little to the northeast of their village was a hill, near the foot of which stood a cluster of large boulders. Inside that cluster from ten to thirty converts used to hold service each Sunday. Underneath one of the largest of the boulders at the foot of the hill, the people had dug out a cave to serve as a small-pox hospital for the village: in a dark corner of this cave their Bible was hidden between two slabs of granite.

The queen's officers arrived at the village to search for the Bible and other Christian books which the queen and government believed, from the reports of spies, were to be found there. A search was made in vain in the huts of the suspected and in the rice-fields; and then the officers made straight for the cluster of boulders on the hillside. When they were actually on the point of entering the cave where the Bible lay, a villager said, "I suppose you know that this is the small-pox hospital." "We did not," they said, starting back in horror. "Wretch! Why did you not tell us sooner? Why

The Malagasy "Buried Bible"

did you let us come so near?" The officers beat a hasty retreat—and the Bible was safe. This very volume may be seen in the Bible House Library. The book had been carefully repaired by its native owners, sewn with thread and vegetable fibre, and protected with a cover of roughly tanned skin. *Missionary Gleanings.*

Prized in Uganda. I gave out on Sunday that the Gospels of Matthew would be sold on Monday morning. I was roused up before it was light by the roar of voices. Close to my house is a slight shed used for the cows to stand in during the heat of the day. Here the books were and the shed was barricaded to keep the people outside, but it was useless—in came the door and we thought the whole shed was going to fall. In ten minutes all the one hundred books were sold. After breakfast a box containing eight hundred books was opened and they were sold as fast as the others. I think a thousand or more people were waiting about, each with shells to buy a book, but we had no more to sell. *Bishop Tucker,* in *Eighteen Years in Uganda.*

Treasured Sunday-School Literature. We need Sunday-school literature, and friends, if there is any literature that pays in this world, it is Sunday-school literature. I sent to my friends over in London for 750,000 pictures. They thought I had gone crazy, ordering so many pictures at one time, but it had to be done. The pictures arrived in due time, and then I got the best writer there was in the mission who was available at that time, a wonderfully gifted man with the pen; and he sat down for months writing booklets adapted to those little pictures. Favors were constantly granted us by the society in the way of pictures and papers, and we were materially helped.

Now let me tell you what made me so earnest in this Sunday-school matter: One day I went into what I called "my pet Sunday-school"—where all the boys were bright. I threw down the picture papers, and I saw, as I took my chair, a number of boys spring for them. I said: "Hold on boys! If you are so anxious for the new papers, how many of you have the old ones?" Every boy's hand went up in response to my challenge. I was surprised, and so I said to one, "You go for yours" and to another, "Go for yours." Very soon afterward the boys returned breathlessly, and brought their papers. Then I said: "Well, boys, you have certainly cared for them, but how many of you know what is in them?" "Ask me, sir!" from all sides greeted my inquiry. So I asked them, and they could tell me the contents of a paper even five years old. I was amazed. I asked the boys how they had remembered these old papers so well. Said one of them: "We don't have any other papers at home and we read this paper going home, and when we got home father said, 'You have a new paper; read it for me,' and I read to father. And by and by mother asked what I got from Sunday-school and I read it to her. The next week visitors came and they asked one after another, 'What is new?' and father called me to show them my reading, and I read for them all. If I have read each of these papers once, I have read them thirty times." *Thomas Craven,* in *Address at Ecumenical Missionary Conference.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

The Bible is the best gift God has given to man. *Lincoln.*

No man can be considered a truly educated man who is ignorant of the Bible. *President Schurman.*

If you were as good as your Book, you could conquer India for Christ in five years. *Said by a Brahman to a Missionary in India.*

And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to hear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah, and His statutes. Dt. 10.12,13.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

The statement has been ventured that two-thirds or three-fourths of the membership of the average Christian Church do not open the Bible oftener than once a month. Is it true?

It is not enough to read our Bible. Its messages must become a part of our lives. Learn and heed this inscription found in an old Bible:

When thou readest what here is writ
Let thy best practice second it;
So twice each precept read shall be
First in ye booke and nexte in thee.

Bishop Bashford says that the habit of personal, daily Bible study, formed while in college, was the most important one made during his last quarter of a century. Now is the time for you to form that vital habit.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

While the work of repairing the temple was in progress, a book, or roll of the law, was found by Hilkiah the priest. Hilkiah told Shaphan the scribe of his discovery, and gave him the book to carry to the king when he made his report in regard to the temple. After telling king Josiah that the work was progressing well, the money having been given to the overseers and the workmen put at work, Shaphan spoke about the book and read it aloud. On hearing the words, the king tore his clothes in token of his troubled mind; for, he said, great is God's wrath against us, because our fathers have not done as this book commands.

Then Josiah chose five men to make inquiries of the Lord for him and his people. They went to Huldah the prophetess, and she declared that the people should be punished for their idolatry, but the king, because his heart was tender, should die in peace before the calamity befell the land.

Then the king called a great assembly in Jerusalem, and after having them listen to the reading of all the words of the book, he covenanted before them to keep God's commandments with heart and soul, and they made the same agreement. As long as the king lived they kept this covenant.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Book of Deuteronomy. 2. The Bible, have we lost it?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Where was Jeremiah born and in whose reigns did he prophesy? (Jer. 1.1-3.) 2. Why did he shrink from the office of prophet? (Clipping, p. 32.) 3. What was the state of affairs in Assyria? (Clipping, p. 308.) 4. When was the prophecy of the lesson spoken? (Jer. 26.1.) 5. What was the chief charge against Jeremiah? 6. What was the watchword of the people, as given in Jer. 7.4? 7. What was the law in Dt. 18.20? 8. What persecutions had Jeremiah suffered? (Clipping, p. 310.) 9. What was the fate of Uriah who prophesied just as Jeremiah did? (Jer. 26.20-24.) 10. What similar charge was made against Stephen? (Acts 6.13, 14.) 11. What charge of blasphemy was made against Christ because of His words in which He referred to His body as the temple? (Mark 14.58.)

Questions to think about. 1. Would the prediction to-day of the destruction of a great cathedral or church bring trouble upon the speaker? 2. Why was it different in regard to the temple at Jerusalem? 3. Why were the priests so angry? (Clipping, p. 308.) 4. What event studied this quarter made the people feel secure in Jerusalem? (First lesson.) 5. What words in the lesson recall the words of the high priest and Sanhedrin in the trial of Christ? 6. On what occasion did Micah make the prophecy recalled in v. 18? (Lesson 9, Second quarter.)

Note-Book Work. In your book of the Kings of Judah write to-day's story of the Finding of the Book of the Law in Josiah's Reign.

LESSON VI—AUGUST 6

JEREMIAH TRIED AND ACQUITTED

Golden Text

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Ps. 27.1.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Jer. 26.1-24. Jeremiah Tried and Acquitted. **T.** Jer. 25.1-14. Jeremiah's Faithful Warning. **W.** Micah 3.1-12. The Warning of Micah, the Morashtite. **T.** Mal. 1.1-14. The Warning of Malachi. **F.** Matt. 26.57-68. Jesus Adjudged Guilty of Blasphemy. **S.** Acts 6.8—7.60. Stephen Adjudged Guilty of Blasphemy. **S.** Ps. 62.1-12. God is the Rock of my Strength. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Jer. 26 PRINT vv. 7-19 COMMIT vv. 13,14

7 And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Jehovah.
8 And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitants? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.
10 And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house. 11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13 Now therefor amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. 15 Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.
16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God. 17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18 Micah the Morashtite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 10 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear Jehovah, and entreat the favor of Jehovah, and Jehovah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

7. *These words.* Vv. 4-6. "The occasion is generally considered the same as that which forms the subject of chapter 7, chapter 7 reporting more fully what Jeremiah said, and this chapter describing at length what is not men-

tioned in chapter 7, the personal consequences to Jeremiah himself" (*Driver*). Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in a few years, when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured and destroyed Jerusalem.

8. *All that Jehovah had commanded.* See vv. 1-2.—*The prophets.* False prophets, Jer. 23.16,17.—*Thou shalt surely die.* The penalty of death was to be inflicted upon a prophet who spoke what God had not commanded, Dt. 18.20, and they thus declare that Jeremiah is a false prophet: their proof is their assurance that they are the chosen people of God, that God *could* not destroy their nation. "Jeremiah's prosecutors probably relied on the fact that they, by virtue of their official position as priests and prophets, were entitled to an opinion as experts upon the question as to whether or not any particular person was lawfully speaking as a prophet; in other words, that they were the judges of the qualifications of the members of their class" (*D. W. Amram*).

9. *This house shall be like Shiloh.* V. 6. Shiloh was once a sacred place, the abode of the ark, but now it was fallen into ruin. See Jer. 7.12;25.11.—*All the people.* Here they seem against Jeremiah: in v. 16 they are for him.

10. *The princes of Judah.* "We have little definite information about them, and are left to conjecture that they were an aristocratic oligarchy or an official clique, or both; but it is clear that they were a dominant force in the state, and that they often controlled the king himself" (*W. H. Bennett*).—*From the king's house.* Where they were doubtless conducting affairs of state.—*House of Jehovah.* The temple.—*They sat in the entry.* They sat in judgment. See p. 308.—*The new gate.* "Probably the gate leading into the 'upper' or inner court built about a century before by Jotham, 2 K. 15.35" (*Driver*).

11. *Worthy of death.* Compare Mt. 26.66.—*He hath prophesied against this city.* Compare Acts 6.11-14.

12. Jeremiah's defense: his message was from God. See v. 15.

13. *Ways and doings.* A favorite expression in Jeremiah: 7.3,5; 18.11; 35.15.—*Jehovah will repent him of the evil.* See p. 189. "We learn from this that all prophecy was regarded as conditional, and that the events predicted might be arrested by timely repentance" (*Farrar*).

15. *Innocent blood.* See Prov. 6.16,17.

16. *Is not worthy of death.* They pronounced him not guilty upon the evidence of his own words.

17. *Then rose up certain of the elders of the land.* "It has been conjectured that as the princes represented the king in judgment, so the elders represented the people, adding their assent to the previously expressed decision" (*Streane*).—*Saying.* The argument is from precedent.

18. *Micah.* Heb. *Micaiah,* RVm. The prophet. See Mic. 1.1; 3.12.—*The Morashtite.* Native of Moresheth, twenty-three miles southwest of Jerusalem.—*The house.* The temple.

19. *Thus should we commit.* If we put Jeremiah to death. Jeremiah owed his safety chiefly, however, to the son of Shaphan, v. 24.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

8. *Jeremiah.* See the account of the prophet, p. 32 of the Introduction.

9. *Why hast thou prophesied, saying.* When Lord Chatham urged England not to make war on the United States, he was howled down by the false patriots of the day. But history stamps him as the true patriot, his opponents as the false ones. When John Bright spoke against the folly of the Crimean War, he was made the butt of newspaper gibes, and nine-tenths of his countrymen laughed at him or sneered at him. But history shows that John Bright was right. He was the true patriot. The false patriot holds that you must never criticise your country's dealings with other lands.

Perhaps the hardest duty that ever falls on a man who loves his country is to point out that his country is doing wrong. That heavy duty fell often to the lot of Jeremiah. The princes, who had no real faith in God, naturally thought Jeremiah's action unpardonable. Disbelieving in God, disbelieving in religion, disbelieving in Jeremiah's prophecies, no wonder they said, "This man seeketh not the welfare of the people, but their hurt." Of course the false patriots of Jerusalem sneered at him, called him a Little Palestiner, said he was

in the pay of the Chaldeans, just as in the past men who value England's fair name and honor even more than addition to her Empire have been slandered by the scribes and Pharisees of an unchristian Press. *F. W. Aveling* in *Christian World Pulpit.*

8. *The priests and the prophets.* Had Jeremiah's address been delivered to the people generally, without containing, as it did, a denunciation of the official classes, namely the priests and prophets, it probably would have passed without official recognition. It was not an uncommon thing for a zealous man to address the people in the name of God for the purpose of correcting wrongs both in public and also in private life, but in this case the priests and the prophets felt that they were personally attacked.

The priests felt aggrieved because Jeremiah called down the wrath of God upon the temple, and with its fall their official functions would necessarily cease. The priests felt aggrieved because by implication he contrasted the prophets who were sent by God to admonish the people with those who were not prophets of Jehovah but seekers of popularity: who, instead of correcting wrongs countenanced them and even declared that they existed by the will of God. *D. W. Amram,* in *Biblical World.*

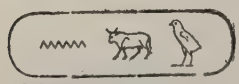
10. *The Princes.* In Jerusalem there was round the kings of Judah, as round the later foreign governors, a large number of civil officials and servants. To give an idea of their number it is enough to mention the high officials named in the ancient court of Judah, the Servant of the King, the Scribe or Secretary, the Recorder or Remembrancer, the Chief of the Palace or Steward, all of them with their households resident in Jerusalem. To these must be added the other *sarim* or nobles who attended the court; several of lesser rank, the *mashkeh* or cupbearer, the keepers of the treasures and of the robes; the *serisim,* probably but not certainly, eunuchs; and a crowd of minor officials, *soterim* and *sopherim,* clerks and secretaries, and so forth. Many of the nobles had their own country estates, the income of which they would draw to the capital. But below them there were large numbers of officials who, as much as the mercenary soldiers, had to be sustained by the state. *George Adam Smith,* in *Jerusalem.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

10. *They sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house.* Courts of justice were held at the gate of a city, where people naturally congregated. Because of this custom, the word *gate* became a synonym for *power,* as in Mt. 16.8. In Jerusalem the court was held at the temple gate.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Necho king of Egypt started forth on a career of conquest and was met on the Plain of Esdraelon by Josiah. In the battle of Migiddo Josiah was defeated and slain B. C. 608. Necho made himself master of the eastern Mediterranean lands, and for three years Judah was forced to pay him a large tribute. The people of Judah made Josiah's younger son Jehoahaz king, but after three months Necho summoned him to Hamath and put him in chains, and established Josiah's son Eliakim on the throne of Judah under the name of Jehoiakim.



Hieroglyphic Name of Necho

Jehoiakim's reign lasted eleven years and was an evil one. He utterly disregarded the Book of the Law which his father Josiah made the people covenant to obey. In the beginning of his reign, Jeremiah attacked the priests and the people alike for their blind reliance upon the inviolableness of the temple, which he threatened with ruin like that which befell the old sanctuary at Shiloh, and he laid bare the shallowness of the religious revival which had thriven as long as king Josiah's strong hand ruled, and now was proving a religion of the letter but not of the spirit. Speaking in the name of the Lord, Jeremiah says: My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Beautifully expressed is his lesson derived from the work of the potter: I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. The divine potter might re-fashion His chosen people. The conscience of the people was aroused and they followed the prophet in a grand public demonstration, in which the symbol of the potter's bottle was carried to the Valley of Slaughter and broken in sight of the people.

Jeremiah could not speak thus boldly without endangering his life. At some great feast, doubtless, when the people were assembled at Jerusalem, the prophet uttered the warning narrated in our lesson.

See the account of Jeremiah, page 32 of the Introduction.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The princes of Judah came up from the king's house into the house of Jehovah. The king's house was below the temple court on the south, separated from it by a wall with an entrance gate. See the diagram, p. 175.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

The story itself will have great interest for your class. Let your pupils see Jeremiah before the great assembly of the people in the temple court and hear him warning them of what would happen because they had not heeded God's many warnings to them. Then the arrest, the noise and excitement, the hurried coming of the judges from the palace to the gateway, the trial, Jeremiah's calmness because of his trust in God, his defense, and his release. The Second Topic is your lesson.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. A year ago the people of Paris were warned that the River Seine, which flows through their city, would overflow its banks. Men skilled in measuring rivers knew that it was rising rapidly, and they knew that the heavy rains and the melting of an unusually large fall of snow would soon bring an immense amount of water down the river which would tear away bridges and flood the city. The French people made fun of their prophecies. As they crossed the bridges they called out gaily to one another, "Look out or you will get your feet wet." But the flood came. Do you not remember hearing about it, how it destroyed property valued at millions of dollars, made thousands of people homeless, and caused very great suffering?

We have to-day a lesson about a great prophet of Judah who warned the people of a disaster that was coming to them. Who was the prophet and what was his warning? How was his warning received?

For Older Pupils. After making the historical connection of the lesson clear, bring the scene which immediately precedes our printed text, verses 1-7, vividly before your pupils. By questions and answers draw a comparison between that scene and the corresponding modern one. These words of the Rev. W. H. Bennett in the Expositor's Bible will prove helpful: Jeremiah's audience consisted of worshippers on the way to the temple, and would correspond to an ordinary congregation of churchgoers. As an acknowledged prophet, he was well within his rights in expecting a hearing from the attendants at the feast, and men would be curious to see and hear one who had been the dominant influence in Judah during the reign of Josiah. Moreover, in the absence of evening newspapers and shop-windows, a prophet was too exciting a distraction to be lightly neglected. From Jehovah's charge to speak all that He had commanded him to speak and not to keep back a word, we may assume that Jeremiah's discourse was long: it was also avowedly an old sermon; most of his audience had heard it all before, all of them were quite familiar with its main topics. They listened in the various moods of a modern congregation "sitting under" a distinguished preacher. Jeremiah's friends and disciples welcomed the ideas and phrases that had be-

come a part of their spiritual life. Many enjoyed the speaker's earnestness and eloquence, without troubling themselves about the ideas at all. There was nothing especially startling about the well-known threats and warnings; they had become "A tale of little meaning tho the words were strong." Men hardened their hearts against inspired prophets as easily as they do against the most pathetic appeals of modern evangelists. Mingled with the crowd were Jeremiah's professional rivals, who detested both him and his teaching—priests who regarded him as a traitor to his own caste, prophets who envied his superior gifts and his force of passionate feeling. He was allowed to finish what he had to say, but in his peroration he had insisted on a subject that stung the indifferent into resentment and roused the priests and prophets to fury.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Burden of Leadership

Jeremiah's Burden. The words of an ancient monarch—*Imperium oceanum esse malorum,* To reign is to be plunged into an ocean of trouble—apply to any position of trust whether in statesmanship or in religion. "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," said king Ahab of Micaiah, the fearless prophet who would not compromise with truth. "I have wearied myself all the days of my life to make known to thee the truths of the faith and of holy living," said Savonarola to his loved city of Florence, "and I have had nothing but tribulations, derision and reproach." The world is a hard place for the Micaiahs who tell evil-doers of their sins, tribulation and even imprisonment have always been their portion.

Jeremiah's whole life was one of martyrdom. So bitter was the hatred against him that his fellow-townsmen of Anathoth sought to murder him (11.19-23); his own family treated him treacherously (12.6); the priests thrust him into the stocks for profaning, as they claimed, the temple court by his prophecies of destruction (20.1,2); and often he seems to have been held up by a mob who clamored for his blood. Standing as he did almost alone, "a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth," exceedingly sensitive as he was by nature to the treatment received from friends and foes, he nevertheless endured the burden that might well have crushed the strongest spirit, for stronger than all persecution from without was the impelling force from within. He could not be unfaithful to his mission. If I say I will not make mention of Jehovah nor speak any more in His name, he says, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing and I cannot contain. The prophet's burden was lightened by the prophet's consciousness of his Lord's approval.

Great Disturbers. To the Israelites in Egypt Moses was a great disturber, and they told him so; but he brought them their only chance, and made them the founders of the world's greatest race. The ancient prophets of Israel were disturbers, street-corner men, stump orators, agitators; but they kept the national ideals awake and the national body from dying of corruption. Jesus Christ was the world's prime disturber, and His apostles were "The men that have turned the world upside down." Athanasius, and Savonarola, Galileo and Columbus, Cromwell and Milton, George Fox and John Wesley, were all disturbers, but their agitations saved the race, and are working its salvation to-day. There is disturbance that is baneful and malicious, and disturbance that is life and health and progress. All the solid comforts of modern life have been won for us by men who could not permit themselves to be comfortable.

Count me o'er life's chosen heroes,
They were men who stood alone,
While the men they agonized for
Flung the contumelious stone;
Stood serene, and down the future
Saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice,
Mastered by their faith divine.

Yes, we shall some day have to make a new beatitude: "Blessed are the uncomfortable, the stirrers-up, the disturbers, and woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" *F. R. Smith,* in *The Christian World Pulpit.*

II Truthfulness an Asset

Taken at Par. This man is worthy of death, declared the priests and the false prophets. What saved Jeremiah? His simple word. He was ready to die for the truth: I am in your hands, he calmly said; do with me as is right and good in your eyes. But he closed his appeal by saying, Of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears, and so effective was this statement that the people declared him not worthy of death, and men arose from the people standing around and defended him before his accusers and his judges. For twenty years they had been listening to Jeremiah as the prophet of the Lord, and for the moment, at least, they were won over to his side by their recollection of him as a man of truth.

The value of words vary according to the reputation of the speaker as regards the truth. The words of one who can be absolutely depended upon, of whom it may be said that "his word is as good as his bond," are taken at par. The words of some people are always discounted. Well says Emerson that every violation of truth is a sort of suicide in the liar. When Philip D. Armour, the successful business man and philanthropist, was asked what he considered the most essential quality for a young man entering on a business career he promptly replied: "Truth. Let him get that. Young men talk about getting capital to work with. Let them get truth on board, and capital follows."

An Established Reputation. I sez ter myself long ago, "Fanny, you 'stablish your word wid folks, white an' black, an' don't you nevah go back on it so long ez you lib," and dat's what I done, honey, I done 'stablish my word and my work, an' ef I is jes' a pore colored woman washin' fer my little piece ob bread an' meat and lame in my right knee, so I hunch when I step, dey ain't nobody in dis world kin say of me to-day, "Fanny ain't kep' her word."

"I ain't got no money in dat bank down dar, but my word's good ez my bond ef I does say it myself. Ef I tells white folks I gwine be dar to do dey washin' uf a Monday, I'se dar. Ef I tells my rent man I gwine pay him Wednesday, dar's de money waitin' when he come. Ef I sez I'll visit fer de preacher, and take a little sumpin ter de sick folks in de alley, I goes an' I takes them de bes I kin rake an' scrape, an' dar ain't none ob dem gwine say, "Fanny can't be trusted." *Quoted by Nannie Lee Frayser,* in *Sunday-School Times.*

A Matter of Convenience. If you tell the truth you can go on about your business, some one has said; but if you tell a lie you have to go back every day or so to see how it's getting along. This fact is illustrated by the answer of a witness in an important trial recently held in California (told by Helena H. Thomas in the "Augsburg Teacher"). The witness was a physician, and the first question put to him by the opposing lawyer was: "Doctor, do you remember having visited my client, two years ago, in Los Angeles, during the month of May?"

"Yes, I recall visiting him about that time," was the unhesitating reply.

"Well, then, can you bring to mind what you said to my client then?"

"Not a single word!" was the emphatic reply. "My practice is altogether too extensive for me to charge my mind with details."

"Well, let me refresh your memory," replied the wily lawyer, who then proceeded to state what his client accused the physician of saying, and ended with: "Now, can you swear that those were not your words?"

"Yes, sir!" thundered the old doctor.

"Pray tell me, if you can," retorted the lawyer in an ironical tone, "how is it possible for you to be so sure what you did not say, when you so confidently affirm that you cannot recall one word of your conversation?"

"Simply because it would have been utterly impossible for me to have made such a statement, under any conditions!" retorted the doctor, with fire

in his eye, "for it was a lie! I have found it convenient, to say the least, to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, during my strenuous life. A prevaricator needs to have a mighty good memory, but a truthful man has nothing to fear!"

This assertion, from a man noted in that vicinity for his truthfulness, was such an unanswerable argument, as well as so convincing to all in the court-room, evidently, that the out-of-town lawyer dismissed the witness without farther questioning.

III Whom Shall I Fear

Be Sound All Through. Two ship-builders were at work upon a fine large vessel. As they sawed away at a piece of timber, they found that a small bit of it was worm-eaten and rotten. "Better not use that piece, Bill." "Nonsense, Jack, what does it matter? It's only a little bit gone; nobody will see it." So the timber was put in, and a bolt was put through the rotten part, fastening it to the sound timbers above.

The ship was finished and launched, and then she started on her first voyage. Many passengers were on board, and there was a valuable cargo in her hold. At first all went well: by and by there came a furious storm. The waves thundered against her and broke over her; her timbers creaked and groaned as she pitched and rolled. At last she sprang a leak. Why? Because of the rotten timber. And so that noble ship went down, and hundreds of lives were lost, while only a few lived to tell the tale. One rotten bit of wood had ruined the ship.

There is a sin which utterly spoils and ruins an otherwise fine character—a sin that is just as fatal to it as that rotten timber was to the ship. What is it? A want of truth.

If a lad has other good qualities, but isn't truthful, somehow things don't seem sound with him. Some time or other he is sure to break down. But a sincerely truthful person is sound all through. You can trust him completely and entirely. If he is sincere, other things are pretty sure to be right with him. *Bible Society Gleanings.*

Our Golden Text.

Read the entire psalm from which our text is taken—a psalm of Fearless Trust in God. That trust was Jeremiah's. In times of persecution he revealed his cause unto God (20.12), or "rolled his cause upon Him," as the Hebrew has been more literally translated. God was his strength and his stronghold, and his refuge in the day of affliction, 16.19. Read also Psalm 31, which is sometimes ascribed to Jeremiah because appropriate to this occasion.

Fear God and No One Else. It was in the year 1745, when Cornwall was like a pandemonium in bitter opposition to John Wesley. It was in the town of Falmouth, and a howling mob filled the streets trying to find the evangelist, determined to kill him. He, in a house in the town, was deserted by all his friends except a young girl—a servant girl—I imagine, whom he calls poor Kitty; and in the room they heard the mob in the street, the fierce yells, and they heard the mob break into the house and into the adjoining room. There was only a thin partition of wood between the room in which Wesley and the girl were, and the mob was battering at that partition. Wesley quietly took down from the partition a mirror lest it should be broken, and then the poor trembling girl said: "Oh, sir, what must we do?" "I said, 'We must pray!' Our lives were not worth an hour's purchase. 'Is it not better to hide?' said the poor girl, 'Would it not be better for you to get here into the closet?' 'No,' said I, 'it is best for me to stand just where I am.'" Now, you will remember that John Wesley, although he was an heroic soul, was a very little body—one of the shortest and apparently feeblest of men, and he counted it better, after praying, to stand just where he was. The mob was soon joined by a number of privateers who came up from the harbor, and were ready enough to join in the chase, and indignant with the people for making so long a business of it. Wesley heard them rush into the neighboring room, and with a cry, "Avast, lads, avast," thrust

themselves against the whole partition, and the whole partition fell down, and the howling mob was in the room before him. Then John Wesley said quietly to them: "Here I am; which one of you has anything to say against me?" and so appalled were they by the quiet courage of the little man, that without knowing what they did, they made way, and Wesley quietly walked through them all into the street, and there in the street, with the mob howling round him, he began quietly to preach, and as he preached the crowd was anxious to hear; and presently the very leaders of the mob—the captains of it, as he calls them—gathered round him and shouted out: "Not a man shall touch him; let him speak." And there he delivered his message, and quietly passed through them to the harbor, where he took boat, and he entered in his journal, "I never saw before the hand of God so plainly shown as here." That man feared God, and he feared nothing else in the world. *R. F. Horton*, in *The Christian World Pulpit.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

The sands were running out in the time-glass of God's judgments *Meyer.*
You have no business with consequences; you are to tell the truth. *Johnson.*
Fearless minds climb soonest into crowns. *Shakespeare.*

Why should we ever shrink or fear,
Whatever seeming ill befall,
Since He, the all-loving, waiteth near,
Who sees and understands it all? *Luella Clark.*

Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge;
But he that hateth reproof is brutish. Prov. 12.1.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Are we known to be so truthful that our word is never discounted?

Different as are the times of Jeremiah and our times, the principle underlying his prophecy of the destruction of the temple is the same now as then, the same for individuals as for nations, that evil doing brings retributions.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Trials for heresy. 2. The authority of precedent. 3. The Book of Jeremiah. See pages 32-34 of this book.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What had happened in the Assyrian Empire since Josiah's death? (Clipping, p.). 2. Read the entire 36th chapter of Jeremiah. 3. Read the words of Jeremiah 22.13-19 in regard to Jehoiakim and his father Josiah. 4. How were Jeremiah's prophecies committed to writing? (Vv. 1-4, 17, 18.) 5. How were oriental houses heated in cold weather? (Clipping, p. 316.) 6. What made the prophecy in regard to Jehoiakim's dead body a fitting one? (Jer. 26.22, 23.) 7. What did Christ say in one of our lessons last year about the indestructibleness of His words? (Mt. 24.35.) 8. Learn all you can about our Book of Jeremiah. (Bible dictionaries, clipping, p. 32.)

Questions to think about. 1. What did the "book" written by Baruch look like? (Clipping, p. 300.) 2. What king of Judah was greatly alarmed on reading the Book of the Law? (Lesson V.) 3. Why was he alarmed and Jehoiakim not? 4. Why did the king use a knife instead of tearing the roll? (Clipping, p. 316.) 5. How are we in danger of mutilating or rejecting the book to-day? 6. What is the position of the book of Jeremiah in our English Bible? 7. How many books in all in the Bible? 8. How many in the Old Testament? 9. When was the translation made which we call the Authorized Bible? 10. Why was it desirable to have a new translation or revised version made at the close of the nineteenth century? (Bible Dictionary, Revised Version.) 11. In what respects is the Revised better than the Authorized?

Note-Book Work. Write an account of the Trial and Acquittal of Jeremiah as a scene in a drama.

LESSON VII—AUGUST 13

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE PROPHET'S BOOK

Golden Text

The word of our God shall stand forever. Isa. 40.8.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Jer. 36.1-8. The Book Commanded to be Made and Read. **T.** Jer. 36.9-19. The Effect of the Reading upon the Princes. **W.** Jer. 36.20-26. The Book Burnt by Jehoiakim. **T.** Jer. 36.27-32. The Book Restored by Order of the Lord. **F.** Isaiah 55.1-13. "My word shall not Return to me void." **S.** 2 Kings 22.1-13. The Book of the Law Magnified. **S.** Ps. 119.1-16. "Thy Word have I Laid up in my Heart." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Jer. 36 PRINT vv. 20-32 COMMIT vv. 23, 24

20 And they went in to the king into the court; but they had laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe; and they told all the words in the ears of the king. 21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king. 22 Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month: and *there was a fire in* the brazier burning before him. 23 And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that *the king* cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. 24 And they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25 Moreover Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them. 26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet; but Jehovah hid them.

27 Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, 28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. 29 And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah thou shalt say, Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they hearkened not. 32 Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

20. *They.* The princes, v. 19.—*Into the court.* "The inner court of the palace. But as this seems to agree badly with v. 22, many with a slight change, read 'into the cabinet'" (*Driver*).—*They had laid up.* For safe-keeping.—*Elishama*

the scribe. The Secretary of State. "In the time of the kings the Hebrew scribes were supported by the state. They were a learned, organized, and influential body of men. They had the care of the law, the sacred rolls of their revealed scriptures. It was their duty to make transcriptions of them, and also to expound them as lawyers or judges, thus serving in a general way as recorders, attorneys, or schoolmasters."

21. *Jehudi.* See v. 14.—*In the ears of all the princes.* They had heard it before, 11-16.—*That stood beside the king.* As his counselors, or attendants.

22. *Winter-house.* That part of the royal palace which was used in winter time; Amos 3.15. Separate winter and summer houses were unknown.—*Ninth month.* Corresponding to our December.—*Brazier.* See Light from Oriental Life.

23. *Leaves.* Or, *columns,* RVm. It was a roll of papyrus or skin, on which the writing was in columns.—*Cut it.* Kept cutting it.—*Penknife.* "Hebrew, a scribe's knife" (*Driver*).

24. *They were not afraid nor rent their garments.* Compare the conduct of Josiah when the Book of the Law was found, lesson V.

25. *Moreover.* It was not without warning.—*Elnathan.* 36. 12; 26.22.—*Gemariah.* The son of Shaphan the scribe, who had read the Book of the Law to Josiah. Jer. 26.24.

26. *The king's son.* Or, *the son of Hammelech,* RVm. "Probably a royal prince, one who had a king among his ancestors, but not necessarily a son of the reigning king" (*Driver*).—*Baruch.* Jer. 32.12.—*Jehovah hid them.* See v. 19.

27. *Which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah.* See vv. 4, 18. There is an apocryphal Book of Baruch.

29. *The king of Babylon shall certainly come.* Nebuchadnezzar came in the reign of Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin.

30. *He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David.* He shall have no son to follow him. Jehoiachin, his son, was crowned king but he cannot be said to have reigned, for he was at once besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and after three months taken captive to Babylon.—*His dead body...frost.* See 2 Ch. 36.6; 2 K. 24.6; Jer. 22.17-19. "Jeremiah recalled the murder of Uriah and the dishonor done to his corpse. Uriah's only guilt had been his zeal for the truth that Jeremiah had proclaimed" (*Bennett*).

32. This roll is doubtless the source of the records in our Book of Jeremiah. —*From the mouth of Jeremiah.* At his dictation; see vv. 17-18.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

23. *When Jehudi had read three or four leaves.* Man is so unwilling to hear anything unpleasant or disagreeable about himself that he gets into a wrong temper before he actually knows what God's object is. Jehoiakim only heard three or four leaves read, and he was so annoyed with the delineation of the wickedness of Israel and Judah, and with the judgments and threatenings of God, that he cut the roll with the penknife and cast it into the fire. Observe that he did not hear the whole roll. Did any man ever destroy the Bible who knew it wholly? Many a man has thrown it into the fire who has heard or read a part only, but I know not that any man who has known the Bible wholly and thoroughly has ever attempted to destroy it. *Joseph Parker,* in *The City Temple Pulpit.*

23. *The king cast it into the fire.*

> There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
> But they whom the truth would indite. *Burns.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

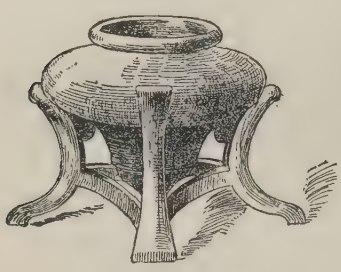
21. The roll. See p. 300.

22. *The king was sitting in the winter-house.* In common parlance the lower apartments are simply *el beit*—the house; the upper is the *alliyeh,* which is the summer house. Every respectable dwelling has both. If these are on the same story, then the external and airy apartment is the summer house, and that for

winter is the interior and more sheltered room. It is rare to meet a family which has an entirely separate dwelling for summer. *Wm. R. Thompson,* in *The Land and the Book.*

22. *In the ninth month.* Though this month corresponds to our December, it is very warm then in Jerusalem in the middle of the day, but quite cold in the evening and early morning.

22. *There was a fire in the brazier.* In an oriental home there is no furnace, stove, or fire-place. On the coldest days the bottom of the movable brazier is covered with ashes and on it a charcoal fire is started out of doors. When the coals are all aglow, it is brought into the room to heat it. The brazier is a pan of earthenware, iron, brass or copper supported by a tripod. When the fire has burnt down the heat is retained by covering the brazier with a frame over which a carpet is thrown. In some homes there is a depression in the earthen floor where a charcoal or wood fire is started, whose smoke fills the room and escapes through a window.



Assyrian Brazier

23. *Three or four leaves.* We must not think of a modern book with leaves, but of a roll whose columns correspond to the leaves.

23. *The king cut it with the pen-knife.* The roll was of parchment, not of paper, and could not be torn. The pen-knife was the "scribe's knife," a long, narrow blade which was used to sharpen a reed pen.

30. *His dead body shall be cast out.* "To be deprived of burial was considered by the Jews one of the greatest dishonors that could come to one. In this they but showed the common feeling of civilized man."

32. *Baruch wrote therein.* The ink was a compound of lampblack, soot, or pulverized charcoal prepared with gum and water. It was sold in small particles or grains. When needed for use some of the grains were put into the inkhorn and mixed with water until the mixture became of the consistency of our modern printer's ink. It was an intense glossy black that retained its color for ages, yet was easily obliterated with sponge and water. *James Freeman,* in *Bible Manners.*

Ancient Writing Materials

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For a long time the great power in the East had been Assyria, but towards the end of the seventh century B. C. the great Assyrian lion (Isa. 5.29), was in his death gasps, and a new power from southern Babylonia rapidly gained the ascendency. This power was the Chaldeans, who, though often conquered by Assyrian and Babylonian armies, had finally moved from the lowlands around the head of the Persian Gulf to the lower Euphrates and Tigris rivers. They were united under Nabopolassar, who had seized Babylon, and became known as the New Babylonian Empire. Together with the Medes, who dwelt northeast of the Tigris, they attacked and conquered Nineveh, the great capital of the Assyrian Empire, in 606 B. C. The part of the empire west of the Tigris was given to the Chaldeans, and Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, started with a large army to subdue it. When in the fourth year of Jehoiakim he defeated Necho, king of Egypt, at the battle of Carchemish (604 B. C.) by the Euphrates, he became master of Western Asia. Then it was that the prophet Jeremiah received the command to write out all the words he had uttered against Israel and against Judah from the days of Josiah, that

the people might have one more chance to repent. Their last chance was rejected.

It is interesting to recall that in the second year of Jehoiakim Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem and carried back to Babylon spoils from the temple and many Jewish youths, among them the prophet Daniel, Dan. 1.1-6.

See the account of the Book of Jeremiah, page 33 of the Introduction.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

This lesson is rich in vivid pictures and in solemn meanings. First picture: Jeremiah walking up and down his room, and talking as he walked: Baruch, writing down rapidly his words, the warnings and prophecies he has been speaking for a quarter of a century past to kings and people. (Sketch on the blackboard the roll as it looked after Baruch finished it and had its fastened to rollers, p. 152.) Prophet and scribe were carrying out God's will, who would give His people a chance to hear the words again and repent of their evil doings. Second picture: The king of Judah is sitting in the warmest room of his palace; it is winter and there is a basin full of burning coals before him. (Sketch the brazier, p. 316.) There are many others with him. Three princes enter and tell him about a wonderful book which Baruch has been reading to the people. "Fetch it," the king commands. "Read it." As Jehudi reads the king grows angry. He has heard the words before and he will not heed them. He seizes the book, cuts it up and throws it into the fire. He acts like the ugly savage princess who saw herself for the first time in a mirror, and not liking her looks smashed the mirror. This did not change her ugliness, nor did the king's burning the book change the punishment that the book said would come to him for his wickedness. In his rage he commanded his officers to go and arrest Jeremiah and Baruch, but they could not find them. Third picture: Jeremiah and Baruch are making another book, writing again the words that the king burned and adding yet other words. The word of our Lord shall stand for ever.

Use this opportunity to tell your pupils some of the facts about the Bible which even the youngest ones should know. Show them the place of the Book of Jeremiah in the Bible, have them learn that there are sixty-four books in all, written by many writers, all telling how God has shown His will and His love to the world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Many years ago a governor of the Bahamas was about to return to England and offered to do his best to obtain from the English Government any favor the colonists most desired. What do you suppose they wanted? "Tell them to tear down the light-houses," they said, "for they are ruining the colony!" The men were wreckers, and they hated the light because it hindered their evil deeds. Many years ago a king of Judah hated the light of God's word, because it showed forth the evil of his deeds, and therefore he wished to have it destroyed. Who was the king?

For Older Pupils. Did you ever hear of the hammer of Jeremiah? Do you know what that hammer was? Would you suppose that an uneducated colored man would know more about the Bible than we do? A writer in *The Independent* some time ago gave an account of a revival meeting in a colored church which she attended with five other Sunday-school teachers. Brother Jonah Watkins, a white-wooled, bent-backed man of seventy was called upon to pray. He prayed, she says, as though his lips had indeed been touched by a live coal from God's own altar. What is the Biblical allusion here? (Lesson VII, Second Quarter) "O Lord," he prayed, "Thou knowest dis people. Here we are befo' Thee. down on our marrer-bones in de lowlands of sorrow. Raise us up, deah Lord, an' stan' us up upon our feet upon de mountain tops of glory. An' de sinnahs of dis congregation, deah Lord, smite 'em wid de hammah of Jeremiah."

"I heard no more," says the writer, Miss La Mance. "The hammer of Jeremiah—what was it? I had read the Prophet Jeremiah through and through, but never a syllable had I caught about Jeremiah's hammer. What did this

bent-backed colored man know about Jeremiah that the wise teachers of the law had overlooked? The question was broached on the homeward walk. Our party had all been struck with the expression, but not one of us six Sunday-school teachers had the remotest idea what Jeremiah's hammer might be. The next day six men and women read their Bibles, and each of the six began at the first verse of the first chapter of Jeremiah. One by one, as we reached the twenty-ninth verse of the twenty-third chapter, we found what we were after.

Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Jeremiah's hammer was God's word, which was able to break down the flinty resistance of the indifferent soul. Could Scripture reference have been more applicable? And the wonder of all was that this low-born son of toil, spelling his texts out word by word, should have found the kernel of the meat while others with every help at hand, passed over it."

How Jeremiah wrote down God's word so that he still wields to-day a hammer that breaks the power of hardened hearts, our lesson tells us.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Indestructible Word

The Word of our God shall stand forever. Imagine for a moment that it is possible to destroy all copies of the Bible the world over. It could be re-written in very large part from the quotations in literature and history. Imagine that all books of whatever sort could be destroyed. How many could be reproduced from memory? Poetry is more easily remembered than prose, and much of the writings of the poets could be again written; but what prose works, what collection of books of all kinds of writing, such as our Bible is, could be reproduced? There are certain portions of the Bible that are of less worth to us than they were to the people for whom they were first written, but most of these, Biblical scholars could re-write, and certainly much of the historical and poetical books, all of the Psalms, most of the prophets and all of the books of the New Testament could be rewritten from the memories of thousands of Christians. The Bible is too thoroughly imbedded in history and literature, too deeply graven on human hearts, ever to be lost. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Skeptics and the Bible.

"Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime:
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'
'Just one,' the blacksmith said, with twinkling eye:
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'

"'And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows is heard
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers, gone."

Realities versus Theories. The history of the past can not be changed; it can only be studied and interpreted. Behind everything with which the new critical methods have to do is the life. That is not subject to Jehoiakim's penknife. Living men are back of all the documents, and if you throw the writings on the rubbish heap, those living figures of the past confront you and inquire as to what disposition you will make of them. The analogy holds in the other sciences. Back of astronomy are the heavenly bodies, and without any particular reference to scientific theories—Ptolemaic, Copernican, or what not—the stars still swing and shine. Back of botany is the flora of earth, and without reference to the teaching of the naturalist the flowers themselves bloom in beauty and freight the air with perfume. Back of geology is the globe on which we live, and whatever may be the translation of its hieroglyphics by the scien-

tists, its surface will afford solid ground for our feet and its harvest will fill our hungry mouths. Though all these sciences should be wiped out of existence, the realities upon which they are founded would remain; stars, flowers, and rocks would abide. *Mathew Simpson* in *The Higher Ritualism.*

II The Written Word

The Book of Jeremiah in the Making. It came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim that this word came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Take thou a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations. And Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of Jehovah. And the princes asked Baruch, saying, "Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?" Then Baruch answered them, "He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book." And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim the king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.

In these words we see our book of Jeremiah in the making. The prophet became convinced that it was the will of the Lord that his prophecies should be committed to writing, and he employed Baruch as his amanuensis. When his first record was destroyed, he dictated it a second time to his scribe with yet other words. If the entire book of Jeremiah was written in the lifetime of the prophet it is natural to suppose that Baruch was the scribe to whom Jeremiah declared it all; and if it were written later, possibly Baruch was the editor.

The prophets preached to their countrymen, and then they, or their scribes, or later writers to whom their words had come down, committed their words to writing. When the prophets were prevented from addressing the people directly, they wrote letters to them as did Paul, and these letters have become a part of our Books. For example, we read in Jer. 29.1: Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residence of the elders of the Captivity, by the hand of Elasah and Gemariah.

The Bible a Growth. Like every other growth the Bible is the result of a living force underlying it. The question of the exact nature of this force lies beyond the region where historical and critical investigations can reach. The Christian consciousness has universally called the force "inspiration." But whatever name may be applied to it, the mind of God is its ultimate source, and that is all that the sincere and devout soul needs to be assured of in using the Bible. A different question altogether is that of the growth of the book as a whole—a question, moreover, that admits of no simple and short answer. There are portions of the Bible which originally appeared as fragments independent of one another, and were put together into larger unities at a later time. Such are, for instance, confessedly, the books of Psalms and Proverbs. Such may be, also, the books of the Pentateuch. There are other portions of the Bible which from the beginning were designed and published as we have them now. Such are the book of Acts, and the epistles of Paul. A third class of books are those which, though originally independent, may have been used together for one reason or another. Instances of this class are Isaiah and Zechariah. Evidently the questions that are raised by this state of things open a legitimate field for historical and literary research, and their settlement one way or another is a great desideratum from the point of view of the devout lover of the Word of God. *Editorial* in the *Homiletic Review.*

A Mistaken Idea. The notion loosely floating about the churches is that the Bible came down from heaven, cleanly printed, nicely bound in morocco, and gilt-edged. This heaven-sent volume is incapable of error in the minutest detail; every sentence, every word and letter and punctuation mark, is infallibly guaranteed. Nobody, to the knowledge of the present writer, has ever said that he holds quite that theory of inspiration: but if the popular idea of the Bible were analyzed it would warrant the inference. And this infallibility is, in prac-

tice, claimed for the Bible as printed in the English tongue and read in our churches. Yet all the world knows, or should know, that the Revised Version which we now possess is based on the Authorized Version, which is an improved edition of the Bishop's Bible, which was a bad copy of Cranmer's Bible, which was based on Coverdale's translations of Dutch and Latin translations and Rogers' version of Tyndale's Bible! And if we expect to find rigidly accurate messages from the very mind of God, conveyed in a version which is a translation of a translation, we are demanding the most miraculous of all conceivable miracles. *Charles F. Aked,* in *Appleton's Magazine.*

III The Wonderful Word

An Inspired Book. The unanswerable argument for the inspiration of the Bible is its influence upon human lives, its power to transform and inspire them, to guide and strengthen them, to comfort and sustain them—a power that no other book in the world possesses; that only a book divinely inspired could possess. We have no more right to judge the Bible apart from the Church, a noted English preacher well reminds us, than we have a right to tear a text away from its context. By the Church he means the children of God, those whose lives prove the inspiration of the Book.

A Dynamic Book. The more we reflect upon it, the more we are convinced that the secret of the largest and deepest influence which has gone out from the British Empire has been the fact of the large place which the Bible has had in the life of that country. We also recall the statement of one of the great political leaders of our country, who maintained that the Bible is the sheet-anchor of this Republic. If the Bible has been the largest formative and preservative influence in these two nations, it has been due alone to the fact that it has been the mighty influence in the lives of multitudes of individuals; therefore, possibly, there could be no more important item for our consideration than the place which this Bible should have in our individual lives.

Not only do these writings show us the needs of our lives, but also their spiritual possibilities. In making the journey to the Pacific Coast, we travel over the plains; then the train works its way up on to the wonderful tableland, and from there around to the foothills, and finally up into the great Rocky Mountains. As I looked out over the great sea of mountain peaks from the back of the railway carriage, I thought we might distribute Christians in much this way: the great body of them down on the dead level, or worse than that, too frequently in the valley; a number up on the tableland; a still smaller number have found their way into the foothills; a very small number we find up on the mountain range, and how few we find climbing in the peaks! Why be satisfied living on the dead level or in some valley if God intends you shall be climbing the great mountain peaks of Christian experience and possibilities which are revealed in these writings? *John R. Mott* in *Northfield Echoes.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Fire does not consume truth. *John Huss.*

It is not pre-eminent seamanship to put the lookout man in irons because he sings out "Breakers ahead!" *Alexander Maclaren.*

Some people have a very small Bible, for they only read the part they like and leave the rest alone. *D. L. Moody.*

The Bible is a divine-human book, as Christ is a divine-human Savior. *Wm. H. Lindemuth.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Jehoiakim sent for the roll and ordered it read to him, but the reading only aroused his anger, for he had no wish to heed God's words. Do we listen to the reading of the Book with the right spirit? Do we have the purpose of the psalmist who has said, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak?"

The king and his courtiers were not afraid when he defied God by his act. Contrast with their conduct that of the king's father Josiah when he rent his garments to show his dismay on hearing the word of the law read, which had not been kept. How do you receive rebuke?

The king could not avert his punishment by destroying the record of it; we cannot make of none effect the warnings of the Bible to us by ignoring them.

The king's wrath was not appeased by the burning of the book; he sought to seize and slay the writer. Ungoverned anger makes a man "beside himself," and leads to terrible deeds.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Jeremiah received the divine command to commit to writing all the prophecies which he had been uttering for about a quarter of a century. These messages of warning might possibly yet cause the people to repent of their evil ways. Accordingly, he dictated them to Baruch, and being "shut up" himself, unable to go to the temple, he directed his scribe to read them publicly there.

The next year a national feast had been proclaimed, designed, no doubt, to stay the threatened approach of the Chaldeans. On the steps leading to the chamber of Gemariah, before the crowded court, Baruch read the roll. The people seem to have listened in silence, but Micaiah, the son of Gemariah, was deeply impressed. He sought his father's abode and finding there the princes, informed them all; they sent for Baruch and had him read the roll to them. Fear seized them as they heard the solemn words of warning, and they resolved to inform the king, first putting the roll safely away in the chamber of Elishama the scribe and counseling Jeremiah and Baruch to hide themselves from his wrath.

They crossed the palace court and entered the private apartments of the king; he was in the room used in winter, and a fire was burning in the brazier before him. The king ordered Jehudi to bring the roll and read it to him and his courtiers. One column was read and Jehoiakim recognized the words of warning. Another and his anger grew. A third, and he grew blind with rage as he heard that the king of Babylon should come and destroy his kingdom: and snatching away the roll he began cutting it to pieces with his knife. In vain three of his officers tried to dissuade him from destroying it. Onto the burning coals he hurled it all, and then despatched officers to seize the prophet and his scribe, but they could not be found.

Again Jeremiah dictated and Baruch wrote down the same words and yet others besides, adding in regard to the king that no son of his should sit upon his throne, and his dead body should lie unburied.

Less than half a dozen years later the king of Babylon came and Jerusalem fell before him, and the words of the roll were fulfilled.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Present-day mutilations of the Bible. 2. How the Bible was written.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What has happened since Jehoiakim burned Jeremiah's roll? (Clipping, p. 324.) 2. Read the 32d, 33d, and 34th chapters of Jeremiah, and follow this with the reading of chapters 37 and 38. 3. Where is our Golden Text found? In what great discourse? 4. What persecutions did Jeremiah endure? 5. What further happened to Jeremiah before Jerusalem was captured? (Chapter 38.) 6. What are characteristics of Isaiah? (Clipping, p. 29.) 7. What are his chief teachings? (Clipping, p. 30.)

Questions to think about. 1. What is the meaning of the last statement in v. 10? 2. Why did Jeremiah care about receiving his portion of land, v. 12, when he knew that the Chaldeans would soon capture Jerusalem and take the people away captive? (Chap. 32, especially verses 24, 25, 36, 37, 44.) 3. What fact would give color to the charge of Irijah, v. 13? 4. What is the impression you gain of the character of Zedekiah in reading chapters 37 and 38? 5. Of the character of Jeremiah? 6. Why was our Golden Text selected for this lesson? 7. How could Jeremiah have saved himself from imprisonment?

Note-book Work. In your Book of the Prophets write an account of Jeremiah's writing and rewriting his prophecies.

LESSON VIII—AUGUST 20

JEREMIAH CAST INTO PRISON

Golden Text

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Mt. 5.11.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Jer. 37.1-21. Jeremiah cast into Prison. **T.** Jer. 38.1-13. Jeremiah Let Down into the Miry Dungeon. **W.** Jer. 38.14-28. The King's Secret Counsel. **T.** 2 Chron. 36.11-21. They Mocked God's Messengers. **F.** Heb. 11.32-40. The Heroes of Faith. **S.** 2 Tim. 4.1-18. "I have Fought the Good Fight." **S.** Rev. 2.8-11. "Be Thou Faithful unto Death." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Jer. 37 PRINT vv. 4-21 COMMIT v. 15

4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not
put him into prison. 5 And Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt;
and when the Chaldeans that were besieging Jerusalem heard tidings of them,
they brake up from Jerusalem.
6 Then came the word of Jehovah unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7 Thus
saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that
sent you unto me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come
forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8 And the Chal-
deans shall come again, and fight against this city; and they shall take it, and
burn it with fire. 9 Thus saith Jehovah, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The
Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart. 10 For
though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you,
and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up
every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.
11 And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up
from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, 12 then Jeremiah went forth out
of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in
the midst of the people. 13 And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a cap-
tain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the
son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou art
falling away to the Chaldeans. 14 Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I am not
falling away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah laid
hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. 15 And the princes were
wroth with Jeremiah and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of
Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.
16 When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and
Jeremiah had remained there many days: 17 then Zedekiah the king sent, and
fetched him: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any
word from Jehovah? And Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be
delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18 Moreover Jeremiah said unto
king Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or
against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19 Where now are your proph-
ets that prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against
you, nor against this land? 20 And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king:
let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee, that thou cause me
not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21 Then
Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of
the guard: and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street,
until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court
of the guard.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

4. *Came in and went out.* He was still free.—*Not put into prison.* See v. 15.

5. *Pharaoh.* Pharaoh Hophra, 44.30.—*The Chaldeans that were besieging Jerusalem.* They raised their siege of the city to go and meet the Egyptian army.

7. *The king that sent you.* Zedekiah, v. 3.—*Pharaoh's army shall return to Egypt.* It is supposed that they were defeated by the Chaldeans.—*The Chaldeans shall come again.* See Jer. 39.2-8.

9. *Yourselves.* Hebrew, *your souls,* RVm.

10. An emphatic way of saying that the purpose of God in regard to Jerusalem shall not be altered.

12. *To receive his portion there.* This seemingly refers to the field at Anathoth, Jer. 32.8, 9, and his going to claim it at this time would prove to the people that he believed his prophecies in regard to the restoration, that though they were going into captivity they should again return to their land.—*In the midst of the people.* Many others were leaving the city, where provisions must have been scarce.

13. *The gate of Benjamin.* The gate on the north that led to the territory of Benjamin.—*A captain of the ward.* The man on guard.—*Thou art falling away to the Chaldeans.* This accusation that the prophet was a deserter to the enemy might receive credence because he had always declared that resistance to Assyria and then to Chaldea was useless and reliance upon the help of Egypt vain.

15. *The princes were wroth.* In our last lesson they were friendly: as Dr. Maclaren says, either a new generation had come with a new king, or else the tempers of the men had changed with the growing misery.

16. *Dungeon-house.* Or, *house of the pit,* RVm.

17. *Zedekiah.* Before he became king he was called Mattaniah, and it has been suggested that on ascending the throne he may have sworn "by the righteousness of Jehovah" to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar, and the latter then said, "Your name shall be Zedekiah, Jehovah's righteousness."—*Asked him secretly in his house.* The king feared the princes, 38.5.—*Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon.* Prophesied in 21.7; 24.8; 32.4; 34.2. "He dared to stand alone with God against a nation in arms" (*Meyer*).

19. *Where now are your prophets that prophesied?* Let them come forth and defend their prophecy, or let them admit that they spoke falsely. Compare Elijah's challenge on Mount Horeb.

20. *Be presented.* Heb. *fall,* RVm.—*To the house.* The prison in the house, v. 15.

21. *The court of the guard.* "A part of the court surrounding the palace railed off to guard prisoners in, whom it was not desired to throw into a common dungeon; their friends had free access to them, but they might not pass beyond the area in which they were confined" (*Driver*).—*A loaf of bread.* Bread in the shape of a round, flat cake. "Three of these were required for the meal of one person."—*Baker's Street.* See p. 325.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

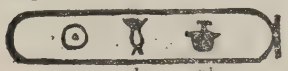
8. *The Chaldeans shall take this city.* Jeremiah and Nebuchadnezzar are dead, but England and Europe and our own generation—these are living. The history of the past is of real value because it can serve the present. War is the weapon of God for the destruction of corrupt and wicked civilizations; the only way in which war can be ultimately avoided is by living as nations honest, sober and godly lives. Hague Conferences are excellent things. The diminution of armaments is much to be desired. But these things will not ward off war unless there be a change at the heart of the people. What is needed is national repentance, national humility, national recognition of the laziness and cowardice and wickedness of much of our modern way of life. If we truly feel that peace is to be desired and if we remember that God is the God of Nebuchadnezzar who makes war as well as the God of the Jews who defended their homeland, we should see to it that our hearts are in a state which the

Almighty may look upon with approval, cleansed from corruption and strengthened in simple obedience. Condensed from a sermon in *The Christian World Pulpit* by *Dr. Newton H. Marshall.*

10. *Wounded men would rise up and burn the city.* The Pope of Rome and the Emperor of France together declared that the Italian people should never acquire Rome, and with it the sovereignty of Italy. Garibaldi was lying terribly wounded; there seemed no hope; yet once more the "wounded man" prevailed. France was burned with fire, Italy was free. And God rules among the nations to-day as certainly as He ruled the nations of old, and just as certainly will He bring us into judgment if we are guilty of injustice, unrighteousness. It may seem that all might and majesty are with an unjust nation, and that "wounded men" only are on the other side; but at God's call wounded men are Michaels wielding flaming swords. *W. L. Watkinson,* in *The Transfigured Sackcloth.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

5. *Pharaoh.* One of the most remarkable archæological finds in recent years at Memphis is that of the remains of the palace of Apiries, or the Pharaoh Hophra who came with his army to the relief of Jerusalem.



Hieroglyph of Hophra

21. *They gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street.* The oriental public oven is a long, low, stone-built vault, like half a railway-engine's boiler, with a stone pavement down the middle, and a long narrow strip at each side for the fire-wood. In the evening the ashes are raked out and the children of the poor often bring a piece of tin, or broken water-jar, on which to carry home some of the glowing embers for the cooking of the evening meal. (Is. 30.14.) In the night the brush-wood and logs are laid in position for the baking of the next morning, the door of the oven being closely shut to keep in the heat and prevent the rapid consumption of the fuel. The reference to this in Hosea 7.4, 6 rather implies that the bakers attended to the preparation of the dough as well as the baking of the loaves. Besides the ordinary bread, many kinds of cakes, sweetmeats, and seasoned dishes are baked in these public ovens, especially during the days before and after religious fasts. *G. M. Mackie* in *Bible Manners and Customs.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

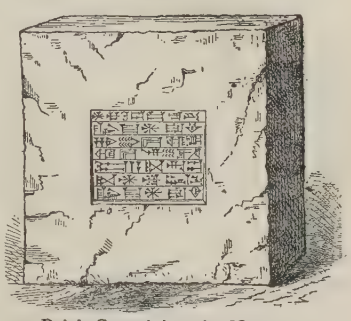
Six years after he burned Jeremiah's roll, Jehoiakim's eleven-year-rule came to an end, but the manner of his death is obscure. See 2 K. 24.6 and 2 Ch. 36.6. Three months later Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem 597 B. C., and carried Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, who had been king meanwhile, away into exile in Babylon with the different officials of his court and other notables and the leading craftsmen and their families, at least twenty thousand in all. Those taken into exile were like good figs, while those left were as the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad, Jer. 24.1-10.

Cameo Portrait of Nebuchadnezzar. The circular inscription reads: To Merodach, his Lord, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, for his own life gave [this—]

Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiakim, on the throne as his vassal. For four or five years Zedekiah remained submissive to his Chaldean master; the prophet Ezekiel (chapter viii) gives a picture of the idolatry that prevailed in Jerusalem at this time. In 588 Hophra became Pharaoh of Egypt and Zedekiah plotted with that monarch to help him cast off his yoke of bondage. Nebuchadnezzar suddenly appeared and began a siege of Jerusalem. The Egyptian army moved to its relief. Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege to attack the Egyptians. Zedekiah and his courtiers seem to have believed that their foe would retreat as Sennacherib had in the days of

Hezekiah. Zedekiah was king from 597 to 586 B. C. The siege of Jerusalem was 588-586 B. C.

The prophecies of Jeremiah are not arranged chronologically. Chapters xxxv-xxxvi concern the time of Jehoiakim, but chapter xxxvii is a continuation of the narrative of chapters xxxii-xxxiv in the reign of Zedekiah, which should be read in connection with this lesson.



Brick Containing the Name of Nebuchadnezzar

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The prison was always a part of the dwelling of some prominent person. Jeremiah was first imprisoned in a dungeon in the scribe's home, later confined in the court of the guard, next thrust into an empty but miry underground cistern, and then returned to the court of the guard. The whole plateau on which stood the temple and palace is to-day honeycombed with passages and cisterns.

Our large cities have districts known by the nationality of the people living there, as the Italian Quarter, Spanish Quarter, etc. Jerusalem had districts or streets known by the occupation of its residents. Dr. George Adam Smith explains: Outside the temple and palace lay the streets or bazaars of Jerusalem and her broad places—the narrow lanes for which the compact city has always been notorious, and the comparatively small open spaces within the gates. The various crafts gathered in their own bazaars. Of these only the bakers' street and the house of the potter (Jer. 18.2) are named; but the gold and silversmiths, the weavers (10.9), the image makers (10.14), the workers in wood, stone and metal (24.1), the locksmiths and the wine sellers (13.12), had each their own bazaar.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Read carefully chapters xxxvii and xxxviii and tell graphically the whole story of what happened to Jeremiah during the siege of Jerusalem. Portray the prophet as a moral hero and adapt and teach in simple language the lesson of the greatness of moral courage, third topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Who was the first king of Judah? The king in this lesson is the last; what is his name? What good kings of Judah can you recall? What evil kings? What sort of king was Zedekiah?

We have a proverb about a rolling stone—what is it? What does it mean? Did you ever hear of a rolling plant? In South America there is a strange plant that never stays long in one place. It is blown along by the wind until it finds itself in a moist place; then it sends down its roots and becomes green, but when the moisture in the ground disappears it pulls up its roots, rolls itself up, and is blown to another spot. This rolling plant never amounts to much; after a short time it becomes a bundle of dry roots and dead leaves. There are people so like this plant that they might be called rolling men or women, or boys or girls. Their minds don't "stay put"; one day they want to do one thing and the next day they want to do the opposite thing. One time they are resolved to do what is right, and very soon afterwards they are doing what is wrong. Zedekiah was that sort of person. He was weak, irresolute. What does "irresolute" mean? We shall see how his weakness led to wickedness.

For Older Pupils. What is the first Beatitude? What does it mean? What is the difference between the poor in spirit and the poor-spirited? What events in the life of Jesus show that He was poor in spirit? In the life of Paul? Was Jesus or Paul ever poor-spirited? Our lesson shows us that the prophet

Jeremiah, stern and strong man that he was, possessed the quality that Jesus mentions first in the Beatitudes. Think over the list of the Beatitudes and see if there is one virtue there which Jeremiah did not possess.

LESSON TOPIC AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Irresolute

A Double-Minded King. Dr. Maclaren calls Zedekiah "the archaic Mr. Facing-bothways." He was, in truth, a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Both his conduct of national affairs and his treatment of Jeremiah show this. He had neither strength of character nor force of will. He believed that Jehovah was the God of Israel and that Jeremiah was His prophet, and he was influenced by Jeremiah when he was with him, but when away from the prophet he was the tool of the princes.

Follow him in his treatment of the prophet. He begs Jeremiah to pray for him, but will not heed his message from God. Jeremiah is imprisoned and he seeks his counsel, but secretly, for fear of the princes. At the petition of Jeremiah he transfers him from the house of Jonathan the scribe to the court of the guard. The princes petition him to let them put Jeremiah to death, and he gives them permission, saying: "Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." Poor Zedekiah, he was nothing but a king! Some Shakespeare might well put in his mouth the words of the king in Richard II—

> Oh, that I were as great as is my grief
> Or less than is my name!

The princes put Jeremiah in a foul dungeon and leave him there to starve to death. Ebed-melech begs the king to rescue Jeremiah, and the king directs him to remove the prophet from the dungeon to the court of the guard. Then the king has another secret interview with Jeremiah, but objects to follow his counsel because, he says, he is afraid of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they mock him, and he begs the prophet not to let the princes know of their interview. Poor, vacillating king!

In the words of Dr. Maclaren, he was a small man on a great stage, a weakling set to face circumstances that would have taxed the strongest. Like most weak men, he found that temptations to do wrong abounded more than visible inducements to do right, and he was afraid to do right, and fancied that he was compelled by the force of circumstances to do wrong. So he drifted and drifted, and at last was smashed to fragments on the rocks, as all men are who do not keep a strong hand on the helm and a steady eye on the compass. The winds are good servants but bad masters. If we do not coerce circumstances to carry us on the course which conscience has picked out on the chart, they will wreck us.

What sort of chief executive has our nation? Mr. J. L. Griffiths, U. S. Counsul-General, said this week at a meeting in London: At the end of the present century it is estimated that the population of the United States will reach two hundred and fifty millions, the largest aggregate of self-respecting and self-reliant human beings ever gathered together on the earth. How important that our rulers should be men who fear God and love justice! President Taft is a big man physically, intellectually and morally. He belongs to the race of strong men. It is said that he always wears a smile, but back of that smile there is granite.

Puppets. We have seen a young man enter politics, and in the first years of his political life stand as stiff and true under the swaying movements as the little reed that is just springing from the meadow. But as he rises into popular view and feels more directly the waves of the different parties and opinions, how he droops and sways! And who can tell which way he will next swing? In his political rise he has reached a position where the waves of party affiliation and policy have a much heavier weight than any of us realize. His opinions are no weaker, but the pressure is so much heavier that his convictions have to yield.

We have seen girls enter society, and young men enter college life, and pass

through that same experience. At first the ideas of the true life, though small and narrow in some features, are clear and strong. Home and school life and parents' words have set the lines of right and wrong. With the larger life of society and college, however, principles carried into action become more intricate and definite, convictions more difficult. Those whom we admire do what we consider questionable, and those whom others admire do what we believe is low and degrading or wrong. Then comes the shrinking from being considered peculiar, from setting ourselves up as stronger or better than the rest. What right has one ugly reed to stand stiff and upright when all the others bend gracefully to the breeze? And so we bend; we will not break, we say. Thus we do the "correct thing"; we create no ill-feeling, we appear modest and never self-assertive; we move in sympathy with our comrades; we strengthen no one, and help no one to keep his convictions, and gradually our principles weaken. Unless, my friends, we guard ourselves and keep true to our better selves, and sometimes dare to stand strong, we become the world's puppet; admired, and at the same time despised; to the popular view, respectable; to the view of all true men, and of your inner self, simply despicable. *Bishop William Laurance in Visions and Service.*

II The Persecuted for Righteousness

Persecuted for the Word. How forbearing Jeremiah was toward the king, how patient and courageous in all his imprisonment and suffering, how trustful in God's goodness, how confident of the ultimate triumph of the chosen people, these two chapters plainly show. His bearing before the king and the princes recalls the time when Jesus endured silently His last persecution and suffering. Suffering and even impending death could not make the prophet falter in his revelation of the message he was commissioned to deliver. "Such a combination of perfect meekness and perfect courage, unstained loyalty to his king and supreme obedience to his God, was only possible to a man who lived in very close communion with Jehovah." His self-forgetful devotion to his country's welfare and "his vicarious sufferings for Israel's sins" may still inspire us.

In the preface of Wycliff's Bible there is this prayer: "God grant us to ken and to kepe well Holie Writ, and to suffer joiefulli some paine for it at the last." How that prayer was answered! Those who possessed copies of that Bible were hunted like wild beasts and when caught were burned at the stake.

No one can tell what countless numbers have suffered persecution for the sake of the Book. The establishment of the first Sunday-schools among the Free Churches of Germany in the middle of the last century was accomplished only through oppression and persecution. "Not a few faithful preachers and teachers found themselves behind prison walls," Pastor Rohrbach tells us: it is a story of suffering, and might be written with blood and tears. As late as 1900 in the country districts the children who attended Baptist or Methodist Sunday-schools were punished by the national day-school teachers and persecuted by the clerical officials.

Our Inheritance from Christian Martyrs. There is a legend which professes to explain how red roses first appeared. It is said that there was a fair young maid of Bethlehem, who had come to trust in Jesus and to love Him; most of her neighbors were heathen, and hated the name of Jesus, and they threatened to burn the girl if she would not give up her faith in Him. That she would not do, could not do, so they bound her to a stake, piled fagots round her, and attempted to set them on fire. But when they put the flaming torch to the fagots, up rose, not wreaths of smoke and flames of fire, but living branches and sprays, bearing clusters of red roses! It is a fancy, a legend, but it has a true and beautiful meaning. It may serve to remind us that we have numbers of things more precious than roses, which have been gained and left for us by the courage and patience of brave men and women, aye, and of boys and girls. How many people have dared and suffered much that we might have the Bible in our own tongue, and that we might be free to read it! *John A. Hamilton* in *The Wonderful River.*

The Beatitude of Persecution. Probably most of us need to think over again the significance of the word *Protestant.* For many generations Protestantism

and persecution were virtually synonymous. We need to remember how the Holy Roman-German Empire and the Holy Roman Catholic Church made an unholy alliance for the physical extermination of all who insisted upon liberty of thought and conscience, and upon the privilege of holding direct communion with God in Christ as well as upon personal study and obedience of God's Word. The Protestants endured persecution only to grow thereby, until at last they entered into that life and death struggle known as the Thirty Years' War, and won a victory for religious toleration and personal liberty which have thereby become corner-stones of modern civilization. *Dr. O. E. Brown.*

III The Morally Courageous

A Great Hero. One of the greatest heroes in the Old Testament is the prophet Jeremiah. He never failed to counsel submission to the Assyrians and Babylonians, though he knew he would be considered a traitor to his country; he never hesitated to foretell the doom that would befall temple and city if the nation continued in its evil course, though he knew he would be accused of blasphemy; he never flinched in his task of rebuking kings and people, though he knew his word would bring upon himself hatred and persecution. There is a courage that will calmly face physical danger; Peter had it when he drew his sword to defend his Master in the Garden. There is a higher courage that will brave taunts or persecution in the doing of one's duty; Peter was lacking here when he quailed before the servant maid's question in the court of the high priest. Jeremiah had both physical and moral courage. Physical courage is desirable, but compared with moral courage it is as candle light to sunlight.

The Manager's Mettle. When the new manager of the "Saint's Rest" mine was discovered to be a one-armed man, the first impression was unfavorable. He was a church-member, too, and on the very first Sunday was chosen superintendent of the Sunday-school. This was well enough, but it indicated to the miners that a mistake had been made. The last superintendent had been driven out, and he was no weakling, either; but he admitted that no money would have induced him to face the perils of another pay-day.

Under this imputation of weakness the new manager began his work. He wore the little button of the Loyal Legion, and so must have been an officer in the army; but he displayed no military title, and called up no past reputation to his help. And as the months wore on, there was less doubting of his courage; although how a man who prayed so earnestly could be good for anything in a fight was a question sometimes debated.

A number of petty matters in which he had opposed evil-minded men made enemies for him, and the time drew near when a test must be made of the manager's nerve. Then came a double opportunity. A man, seized for a horrible crime, was about to be lynched. The men who captured him were mad with rage and rum, and hurried their prisoner into a box-car, and guarded him while they sent for a rope, and the other miners, who were scattered in the hunt.

Then came the manager of the mine, walking with a mighty stride, straight up the slanting railroad-tie to the box-car door before any man opposed him. The mob gathered itself, but he knocked down one man with his right arm, and with a sudden lunge the other way hurled down another with his armless shoulder. He collared the cringing prisoner, and walked him down the tie, and over to the company's office. And when the mob assembled round the door he made no answer, but the first man who struck the door met him with a pistol in his one hand, and the whole mob fell back.

He kept them at bay till the sheriff came, and before that time—for such things come in pairs—the other occasion rose. The mob did not believe it when he first called out that the mine "boss" had telephoned that the mine had caved; but they soon learned it was no ruse; and by the time the sheriff had his prisoner, they had enough to think about in the rescue of four buried men.

It was no ordinary cave-in. There had been an explosion, and afterwards a fire; and the men who first went into the hole in the mountainside declared no rescue was possible. But the manager went in, and others after him.

The manager was everywhere that night. Where to play the hose, where to ply the pick, where to prop a timber—he directed all. He risked his life a score of times, but always inspiring others to his aid they reached the men at last,

unconscious but alive. They laid them in one of the little tram-cars, and wheeled them out into the gray dawn. The surgeon looked them over, and said they would pull through, and the manager said, "Good morning, boys!" and strode toward home with as free a stride as if he were not fatigued.

Then from men who seldom cheered there went up a hoarse but hearty shout. The manager had proved his mettle. Condensed from *Youth's Companion.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

To be weak is to be miserable. *Milton.*

The highest courage you can ever show is to dare to do your duty. *Wayland.*

It is the greatest courage to be able to bear the imputation of the want of courage. *Henry Clay.*

> I am constant as the North-star,
> Of whose true-fixed and resting quality
> There is no fellow in the firmament. *Shakespeare.*

So then am I become your enemy by telling you the truth? Gal. 4.16.

Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. Rev. 2.10.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

"Dauvit, Dauvit, make your religion an everyday business of your life, and not a thing of fits and starts." This was the counsel that David Livingstone received from his grandfather on leaving home for college. How grandly he lived up to it, all the world knows. There is a vast contrast between the every day business of Livingstone's religion and the fits and starts of Zedekiah's. Toward which one's example are you tending in your religious life?

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. War as God's instrument. Do we deserve peace?

2. The wages of prophets of warning to-day. "The men who dare to tell their countrymen their faults are laid hold of by the Irijahs who preside over the newspapers, and are pilloried as deserters and half-traitors at heart."

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read all the accounts of the capture of Jerusalem: 2 K. 24.18-25.21; 2 Ch. 36.11-21; Jer. 38.28-39.14; 52.1-30. 2. Who was the first king of Judah? The last? 3. Who made Zedekiah king? 4. What was the date of the destruction of Jerusalem? 5. How long did the Kingdom of Judah last after the fall of Samaria? 6. Read Jeremiah's prophecy of the exile in 25.3-11. 7. What reason is given in Lam. 1.8 for the fall of Jerusalem? 8. How was the prophecy of Ezek. 12.12 fulfilled? 9. Where was Riblah? 10. Describe the course from Jerusalem to Babylon. 11. What can you learn about Babylon? (Bible dictionaries, clipping, p. 337.) 12. Read "the sorrows of the exiles in Babylon," Ps. 137.1-6. 13. What choice was given Jeremiah by the captain of the guard? Jer. 40.1-6. 14. Where was he taken later? (Jer. 43.4-7.)

Questions to think about. 1. What were the sins of Zedekiah? 2. What were the chief causes that led to the captivity? (Clipping, p. 334.) 3. What warning had the people of Judah in an event that occurred 134 years before this? (Fall of Samaria.) 4. What other warnings had they had? (2 K. 24.1, 2; 11, 12.) 5. Why did Nebuchadnezzar have the people taken to Babylon? (Clipping, p. 333.) 6. Why was the Captivity the best thing that could happen to Judah? (Clipping, p. 336.) 7. Does retribution always follow wrong? 8. Is merited punishment always a good thing? 9. What was the result of Jeremiah's mission? (Clipping, p. 33.)

Note-book Work. In your Book of the Prophets write an account of Jeremiah's Imprisonment during the Siege of Jerusalem.

Read the Book of Lamentations and make a list of the words that acknowledge the sins of the people. Those that show the suffering during the siege. Those that hold forth promise of better days.

LESSON IX—AUGUST 27

JUDAH CARRIED CAPTIVE TO BABYLON

Golden Text

Be sure your sin will find you out. Numbers 32.23.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Jer. 39.1-18. Judah Carried Captive to Babylon. **T.** Jer 52.1-16. The City and King Captured. **W.** Jer. 52.17-23; 2 Kings 25.13-17. The Temple Despoiled. **T.** 2 Kings 25.22-26. Wicked People Left in the Land. **F.** Ezek. 12.1-20. Ezekiel's Prediction of the King's Capture. **S.** Lam. 2.1-10. The LORD hath Cast Down the Beauty of Israel. **S.** Lam. 4.1-16. The Horrors of the Siege. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Jer. 39 PRINT vv. 1-10 COMMIT vv. 9,10

1 And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken (in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and besieged it; 2 in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city), 3 that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, *to wit,* Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the rest of the princes of the king of Bablyon.

4 And it came to pass that, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out toward the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; and he gave judgment upon him. 6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes; also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also that fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained. 10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, that had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

Read the parallel accounts in Jer. 52.1-30; 2 K. 24.18-25.21; 2 Ch. 36.11-21.

38.28. *And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken.* These words should be followed by v. 3: vv. 1 and 2 are correctly set off by parentheses in the RV. It is thought by scholars that these two parenthetical verses, which tell when the siege began and when the city was taken, were an explanation of "Jerusalem was taken" written by a copyist in the margin and afterwards incorporated in the text.

1. *In the ninth year of Zedekiah.* B. C. 586.—*Nebuchadrezzar.* A more correct spelling than *Nebuchadnezzar.*

2. The siege, then, lasted about eighteen months.

3. *Sat in the middle gate.* A deliberative assembly.—*Nergal-Sharezer.* "Son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, he who murdered Ebed-Merodach and after seven years' reign was slain by Cyrus" (*Streane*).—*Rab-saris.* Title of an

officer, RVm.—*Rab-mag.* Title of an officer. There are but four persons named here.

4. *By the way of the king's garden.* Thought to have been on the hill Zion.—*Through the gate betwixt the two walls.* "On the south of the city, probably the 'fountain gate' of Nehemiah, the two walls being those below this gate along the west side of the east hill of Jerusalem, and the east side of the west hill" (*Driver*).—*The Arabah.* The name for the valley in which the Lower Jordan and the Dead Sea lie.

5. *Gave judgment upon him.* Heb. *spake judgments with him,* RVm.

9. *Nebuzaradan.* See 52.12-16,26.—*Captain of the guard.* "Literally chief of the executioners, *i. e.* of the king's body guard, to whom such duties fell" (*Streane*).—*Captive.* For an account of their life in Babylon see p. 338.—*The city.* The burning of Jerusalem and the carrying away of the temple treasures is recorded in 2 K. 25.9,10,13-17.—*Fell away to him.* Came to him of their own accord.

10. *Gave them vineyards and fields.* To be vine-dressers and husbandmen, 52.16.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

38.28. *When Jerusalem was taken.* If Bible history is lit by the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the horror of the siege of Jerusalem, God also wrought terrible works of judgment in the catastrophe of the Roman Empire and in the French Revolution. *John Watson.*

How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
She is become as a widow, that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces is become tributary!
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud of his anger!
Her gates are sunk into the ground: he hath destroyed and broken her bars:
Her king and her princes are among the nations where the law is not.
All that pass by clap their hands at thee;
They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying,
Is this the city that men called
The perfection of beauty,
The joy of the whole earth?
Jehovah hath done that which he purposed; he hath fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old.
The Lord will not cast off for ever
For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses.
For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.
Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to Jehovah.
Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned:
Renew our days as of old. Condensed from *Lamentations.*

3. *The princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the middle gate.* These intruders were all unconscious of the meaning of their victory, and the tragedy of their presence there. They thought that they were Nebuchadnezzar's servants, and had captured for him an obstinate little city, which had given more trouble than it was worth. Its conquest was but a drop in the bucket of his victories. How little they knew that they were serving that Jehovah whom they thought that Nebo had conquered in their persons! How little they knew that they were instruments of the most solemn act of judgment in the world's history till then! *Alexander Maclaren,* in *The Book of Jeremiah.*

9. *Nebuzaradan carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people.* It is interesting and helpful to observe how a modern writer has conceived and portrayed these most pathetic features of a people's banishment. It is a simple and commonplace scene of the fifteenth century that Charles Reade describes in a brief passage in "The Cloister and the Hearth" (chap. xxxiii). For the better cultivation of a depopulated district the clerk of Burgundy had ordered that a few score of people be transferred thither from their

own native village. They are met by two fellow-travelers—a soldier of fortune and the hero of the story, himself a fugitive from Holland. The cry of "Long live the Duke!" is raised by the soldiers, and then "a loud and piercing wail broke from every woman's bosom, and a deep, deep groan from every man's. Oh! the air filled in a moment with womanly and manly anguish." At this the sergeant remarks, "'*Les ingrats!* they are going whence they were *de trop* to where they will be welcome—from a starvation to plenty, and they object; they even make dismal noises. One would think we were thrusting them forth from Burgundy.' 'Come away' whispered Gerard, trembling—'come away' and the friends strode forward. When they passed the head of the column, and saw the men walk with their eyes bent in bitter gloom upon the ground, and the women, some carrying, some leading, little children, and weeping as they went, and the poor bairns, some frolicking, some weeping because their mothers wept, Gerard tried hard to say a word of comfort, but choked, and could utter nothing to the mourners...'Decant them?' he groaned. 'Ay, if blood were no thicker than wine. Princes, ye are wolves. Poor things! poor things! Ah, Denys! Denys! with looking on their grief mine own comes home to me.'" Thus the great dramatist, with truest art, sets forth the essential character of one of the most dreadful of human calamities by revealing how hideous and mournful it is, even when it seems most vulgar and insignificant. *Dr. H. V. Hilprecht,* in an article on *Latest Research in Bible Lands, Sunday School Times.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

7. *He put out Zedekiah's eyes.* The blinding of prisoners was a common practice among the Babylonians, Assyrians and Persians. Once it was the

Assyrian King Blinding a Prisoner

custom for the Sultan of Turkey on ascending the throne to slay or blind all his half-brothers. Our illustration is from a marble slab found at Khorsabad, and represents Sargon of Assyria holding a prisoner by a thong attached to a ring inserted in his under-lip and thrusting a spear into his eye.

Jewish Captives. From the Sculptures at Kouyunjik

Bound him in fetters. A pair of bronze fetters now in the British Museum weighs nearly nine pounds. They were found at Nineveh and probably resemble those with which Zedekiah was bound.

9. *Carried the people away captive.* The Assyrians had already noticed that the strong roots of the power of an individual as well as of a nation lie in its native soil. Home and country mutually determine each other and form an inseparable union. In those days they did so more than now, for then religion also was an integral part of the nation, and religion, too, was indissolubly associated with the soil. A nation's country was the home and dwelling place of its national Deity, to be torn away from one's native soil was equivalent to being torn away from Him, and thus was destroyed the strongest bond and the deepest source of nationality. *Carl Heinrich Cornill,* in *The Prophet of Israel.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It was in the year 937 B. C. that the ten tribes revolted and Judah became a separate kingdom under Jeroboam. The first century of her separate existence was one of comparative freedom from enemies without. Samaria fell and the Northern tribes were carried off into captivity by the king of Assyria in 722 B. C. Judah then became a "buffer-state" sought by contending world-powers. Most of its rulers were subject to Assyria and then to Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, received the oath of allegiance from Zedekiah whom he placed on the throne. But Zedekiah, as we have seen, broke his pledge, refusing to follow Jeremiah's counsel that the only hope for the nation lay in submission to Nebuchadnezzar; then came the capture of Jerusalem, and the deportation of most of the people.

This was the second and final deportation. The first was in 597, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took Jehoiakim and perhaps ten thousand others away captive, among them the prophet Ezekiel, together with much spoil, 2 K. 24.10-16. The final siege lasted a whole year and a half. The city was taken "when all the bread was spent," in 586 B. C., and the kingdom of Judah came to an end. The captivity lasted fifty years from the second deportation and then "the remnant" returned to Palestine.

Countries of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley

Keep in mind that while Assyria, Babylonia, and Chaldea lay in the region watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates, Assyria proper was on the north on both sides of the Tigris; Babylonia proper was south of Assyria between the Tigris and the Euphrates, and Chaldea proper was on the Persian Gulf southeast of Babylonia. At the time of the capture of Jerusalem the names Babylonia and Chaldea both referred to the New Babylonian Kingdom founded by Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar. See p. 316.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Zedekiah and his warriors escaped through the southern gates and fled down the Kidron Valley to the Valley of the Jordan (the Arabah), but were captured on the plains of Jericho. Then he was taken a prisoner two hundred miles northward to Riblah in the Upper Orontes, about one hundred miles north of Dan, where Nebuchadnezzar was stationed. There his sons and the princes were slain, and he was blinded and then taken in fetters to Babylon.

A month later (Jer. 52.4) the bulk of the population of Judah was deported to Babylon. They did not go directly east, across the desert, but northward to Damascus, then across to the Euphrates, and southeastward to Babylonia. See the map on page 53. Let one of your pupils draw it upon your board.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Ask your pupils if they were ever away from home in a strange place, if they were lonely or homesick, how they would have felt if they could not have returned to their own home! Tell them that the people of Judah were forced to leave their homes in their beautiful city of Jerusalem, and go to a far-off land they had never seen. Review the situation at Jerusalem. Describe the army of the enemy that encircled the city, shutting the people in so that they could not leave it, the supply of bread growing smaller and smaller, till the people were starving. Do not dwell on their sufferings, but hasten on to the breaking down of the strong walls and the coming in of the enemy. Then let them see the king hurry away in the darkness, overtaken by the Chaldeans, carried to Riblah and then taken captive to Babylon. Say little or nothing about the death of his sons and his being blinded; emphasize rather that his punishment and that of the people were for their disobedience to God. Teach your pupils the thought of the first Topic, that the disobedient are punished for their own good. Use the illustrations about the boy and the mule, p. 336, and the Good Shepherd, p. 337.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Recall the time when the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses escaped from Egyptian bondage, crossed the Red Sea and started for the Promised Land. Then recall a second glad procession that under Joshua's leadership crossed the Jordan and entered that land. Next recall the sad departure from Samaria of the northern tribes, who never came back, and the earlier procession that started from Jerusalem for the land of their captors. (Hist. Background.) We have come to the last forced departure of the people of Judah, to the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the nation that would not repent and obey God's laws.

For Older Pupils. The Septuagint Version of the Book of Lamentations begins with these words: "And it came to pass, after Israel had been carried into captivity and Jerusalem had been laid waste that Jeremiah sat weeping and lamenting with this lamentation over Jerusalem and said." Near the Damascus Gate on the north of Jerusalem there is a cave called Jeremiah's Grotto, which tradition says is the very spot where the prophet sat while writing this Book. Although the Hebrew version is anonymous, it is genarally believed that the Book is the work of Jeremiah. The Book is read by pious Jews every Friday afternoon at the Jews' Wailing Place in the city of Jerusalem and on the ninth of August, the anniversary of the day on which the temple was burned; it is read in Jewish synagogues the world over.

Throughout our study this year we have heard the destruction of Jerusalem threatened, and for many lessons we have seen it slowly but surely approaching. Now we see its advent. The record is told dispassionately: it should be supplemented by the Book of Lamentations with its account of the horrors of the siege and the pathos of the capture and destruction of the city, with its confession of sin, its acknowledgment that the punishment was of God for the sins of the nation, with its assurance that God pitied where He punished, and with its faith that in His mercy God would "renew their days as of old."

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Wages of Sin

The Cause of the Captivity. A modern historian might say that Jerusalem was captured because Hezekiah and his army were no match for the great Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, and because the last kings of Judah had followed a very unwise policy in trying to escape the Assyrian and then the Babylonian yoke by relying on help from Egypt. All this was true, but while these may seem the primary reasons for the Captivity, they are in fact only secondary. Back of the political causes were the moral causes. Judah had grievously sinned (Lam. 1.8), had become thoroughly corrupt, idol-

atry with all the evils in its train had spread with rapid pace during the last years of the kingdom, till only the severest measures could discipline her. The punishment of exile was sent by God, who employed Nebuchadnezzar as His servant (Jer. 25.9; 27.6), in working His will. Jehovah hath afflicted Jerusalem for the multitude of her transgressions (Lam. 1.5). The ax which was carried before a Roman Consul was bound up in a bundle of rods to show that the extreme penalty was never inflicted until milder means had failed. Milder means had been tried with the chosen people of God: the prophets had constantly warned them, many of the people had been carried away captive, and the treasures of the temple had been taken. Very patient and long-suffering had God been with them till, even as a physician counsels an operation as "a last resort," He used the drastic remedy of captivity to work their ultimate cure. It proved efficacious. In Babylonia they gave up their gross idolatry, and the faithful remnant that returned were loyal to Jehovah their God.

A Nation's Foes are they of their Own Household. Jerusalem's doom, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the minister, was guaranteed by the vices of its rules, the perfidy of its priests, the corruption of its people. The chief dangers are not outside. "No great nation," says Dr. Chamberlain, "has really been destroyed by attack from without." Not Babylonia, which had been prepared for the triumph of Cyrus by its soft luxury and treasonable conspiracies; not Persia, whose sordid intrigues and royal profligacy gave success to the assault of the Arabs; nor Egypt, who, before she was struck by Persian, Roman and Moslem, had lost her power to resist; nor Greece, who had succumbed to her own degenerate passions long before her political overthrow; nor Rome, where effeminancy and sensuality and imperial scorn of the people, and popular discontent and wrath, made city and empire an easy mark for Goths and Huns. The dangers are within. That was the mournful experience of Israel and the faithful warning of her brave citizen prophets. And that is the solemn truth about ourselves. A nation's foes are they of their own household. *Wallace Mac Mullen,* in *Methodist Review.*

No Man can put off the Law of God. In my boyhood, the first reading-lesson in my spelling-book was, "No man can put off the law of God," words which ought to be inscribed in golden letters on our halls of legislature, and engraven indelibly on the heart of every magistrate, lawmaker, and citizen. In national affairs, there is intrinsic right, which law cannot neutralize; intrinsic wrong, whose character no law can modify, whose penalty no law can avert. In every act, God has His part. He works through men, when they will be His agent; upon them, in fearful recompense, when they essay to act independently of Him. The march of retribution is sure as the ordinances of the heavens. *Andrew P. Peabody,* in *The Immutable Right.*

Be Sure your Sin will find out You. Our Golden Text reads a little differently: it says, Be sure your sin will find you out, but *you* is the emphatic word, and it does not mean, as so often it is taken to mean, that your sin will be found out, but that you will be found out by your sin, that your sin will find out you. In a recent magazine article by Prof. Charles Foster Smith of Vanderbilt University, I find this striking example of the truth of the words of Moses selected for our Golden Text. The most impressive scene I ever witnessed at Vanderbilt University was when the venerable Chancellor Garland one Wednesday morning announced from the platform that a certain graduate, whose name he withheld, had sent back his diploma. It had been returned with the confession that in a single examination the student had used forbidden help, and though he had never been suspected and years had passed, he had never had any peace of mind. He, therefore, returned his diploma and asked that his name be stricken from the roll of alumni and announcement made of his confession, preferring public disgrace rather than to bear longer the intolerable memory of a single secret sinful act.

The Chancellor said that he had after much consideration decided that the young man's repentance and suffering had been a sufficient atonement for his error, and insisted on his retaining his diploma. But the young man would not consent. "And here is the diploma," said Dr. Garland, holding out the

mutilated parchment; "but I have cut out the name and the secret shall die with me." The hall was as still as death. The Chancellor had conveyed his lesson in morality. No one who heard that short impressive statement and saw the effect upon the students could believe such a thing likely to occur again as long as that tradition remained at the University.

Retribution, though long delayed, is Sure. When the Superintendent of Schools of Kansas City was a sixteen-year-old boy he worked on a plantation in Arkansas. One day he was plowing with a mule and a cow, but the mule was often balky and gave his driver much trouble. After making many unsuccessful attempts to make the mule work, "Jim," as he was then called, took a rope and making a slip-knot in one end, placed it round the lower jaw of the mule, and tied the other end of the rope to the fetlock of that hind leg which was doing the kicking. Then he went back to the plow-handle, and gave the usual signal for the team to start. The mule immediately began to kick, but found that every motion of the hind leg pulled painfully upon the lower jaw, and the kicking stopped. Then Jim took off the rope, returned to the plow-handles, and repeated his command to go ahead. The team started at once, and plowed straight onward without any more kicking from the mule.

Would that every act of disobedience could bring at once upon each human being its fitting retribution! Because evil is not punished at once, many seem to believe that it never will be. Our lesson illustrates the truth that though "God's patience stretches from generation to generation, and His judgments tarry because He is not willing that any should perish, yet for all the long-suffering there comes a time when even divine love sees that it is needful to say 'now' and the bolt falls."

II The Use of Discipline

Sifted as Wheat. In the close of the Book of Amos occurs this prophecy: Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; save that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith Jehovah. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations like as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth. In the exile Israel was in truth sifted; the chaff, the irreligious, separated from the good kernels, the religious.

The exile that seemed such a grievous calamity was a great opportunity that prepared the nation for a greater career. An editorial in the *Methodist Review* tersely explains: the purpose of Jehovah in permitting the Captivity was not unaccomplished. He meant to cure His chosen people of their sins and follies, and recover them to spirituality and purity. The stay in Babylon was a period of renovation. Israel was cleaned of the past and fitted for the future. Changes of world-wide and age-long importance were wrought in God's people. They were chastened in spirit, purged of their idolatries and cured of their sins. Their ideas were expanded, their narrow tribal notions enlarged and their language greatly modified. During this period the chief traits of the Jewish character were formed and permanently fixed: their intense historic consciousness of the national past, their passionate regard for the national future, their strict theocratic legislation, their plasticity of intellect, and rigidity of social observance. The absence of the ritual services of the temple brought out the more spiritual elements of their religion, and the nation was better prepared for the approach of the dispensation of the Gospel.

Life a Chastening. As the potter puts the vase into the oven so that out of frailty it may become strong, that mere clay may be changed to opal, that evanescent colors may become vitrified and indelible, and the whole fabric be glorified and made worthy of the palaces of kings, so the divine Potter subjects us to one furnace after another until the work of His hands becomes the image of His thought, divinely perfect and beautiful, worthy of His palace and presence. Life is an immense, intricate, manifold, unceasing chastening, to perfect our nature so mysteriously rich in glorious possibilities. What a hopeless puzzle everything becomes if this is not the explanation! It is the explanation. *W. L. Watkinson,* in *The Supreme Contest.*

The Good Shepherd. A shepherd once had a wild lamb that gave him more trouble than all the rest of the flock. It was often getting lost, and he feared that it would some time stray so far away it could never be found and then it would starve to death or be eaten by wild beasts. Finally he took the lamb and broke one of its legs. That seemed a cruel thing to do, but it was the only way he could save it. Then he set the leg and tenderly bound it up, and day after day carried the helpless lamb in a sling from his shoulders, feeding it from his hands. When the leg was healed and the lamb was placed upon its feet it never again left the good shepherd's side.

III In the Land of the Exile

A Glance Ahead. For forty-eight years after the capture of Jerusalem the Jews lived in the land of their conqueror, but they never ceased to bewail their native land. "The sorrows of the exiles in Babylonia are told in the 137th Psalm:—

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her skill,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.

When Cyrus, king of Persia, became master of Babylon he allowed the exiles to return to their beloved city. There the Jews dwelt till in the reign of Vespasian of Rome, Titus, one of his generals, took Jerusalem and leveled it with the ground. Since then the Jews have been scattered over the earth, a people without a country.

The City of Babylon. Babylon was a very ancient city. It was conquered by Tiglath-Pileser I about 1100 B. C., and for most of the time after that till the fall of Nineveh it was in partial or complete subjection to Assyria, yet it remained the center of science, literature and religion for the eastern world.

Sennacherib boasts in his inscriptions that he completely destroyed the city. About 604 B. C. while the Medo-Scythian hordes were planning to overthrow Nineveh, an Assyrian general named Nabopolassar was sent by the king of Nineveh to put down an insurrection in Babylon. He put himself at the head of the Babylonians, joined the enemies of his country in a successful attack on Nineveh, usurped the throne, and transferred the capital from Nineveh to Babylon, thus founding the New Babylonian Empire.

Nabopolassar's son and successor was Nebuchadnezzar, a brilliant general and astute statesman, who reigned forty-three years. The city of Babylon was his delight, "The Lady of Kingdoms, the Glory of the Chaldees, Excellency, the Joy of the whole Earth." On "this great Babylon built by the might of his power and for the glory of his majesty" he lavished untold wealth.

Tradition has ascribed a vast area to the city; but recently the Germans have excavated the entire walls and found them twenty-five feet thick with buttresses every sixty feet, enclosing an area about the size of London. In the left embankment of the Euphrates which ran diagonally through Babylon bricks are still seen bearing in three, four, five or seven lines the name and titles of Nebuchadnezzar.

Wonderful were the buildings of Babylon. The foundations of the most famous of all the Babylonian temples, Esagil, the House of Heaven and Earth, the temple of the national god Marduk, and of the temple of Ishtar has been unearthed. The great processional way that led from the temple of Ishtar to the king's palace has been found, and the two huge towers that midway supported the double gates are still standing, faced by terra-cotta reliefs of massive bulls and fierce dragons.

The smaller palace of Nabopolassar was leveled by Nebuchadnezzar in order

to erect on the same spot his gigantic palace. Perhaps ten more years will be required to complete the work of excavation now being carried on by the Germans, but much has already been done. Some of the walls of the palace are twenty-four yards thick, "honeycombed with the tiny chambers wherein his myriad retainers were herded." The wall tiles are stamped with Nebuchadnezzar's name. Dr. Edgar James Banks, Field Director of the Expedition of the University of Chicago to Babylonia, says that upon the walls of the palace huge bulls, lions, dragons, and griffins in relief, are enameled with brilliant colors upon the bricks, and that if the interior of the palaces corresponded with their outer beauty and stateliness it is not surprising that they excited the admiration of the Greek historian. The palace gives an impression of massiveness and magnitude surpassed only by the Egyptian pyramids.

An immense audience chamber has been disclosed, evidently once adorned with precious stones and woods, where Nebuchadnezzar received homage on his return from the conquest of Jerusalem, where probably Belshazzar's feast was held, where Cyrus the conqueror of Babylon was enthroned, and where perhaps Alexander the Great engaged in that fatal revel after his overthrow of the Empire of the East.

How the Exiles lived in Babylon. From numerous remains it is not difficult to construct their manner of living. The houses in which they dwelt had walls of clay, seldom of burned brick. The single room, as in the modern Babylonian house, was lighted by the door, or a small hole near the roof, to permit the escape of the smoke of the fire. The trunks of the date-palm, split into halves, were laid across the walls for rafters to the roof; above them was a layer or two of matting woven from the reeds from the neighboring swamps, then a thick layer of reeds, and finally a foot or more of clay to exclude, the rains of winter and the heat of summer.

The household furniture was simple, differing but little from that employed by the dwellers of Mesopotamia. The mill-stone, the sack of barley meal, the stone knives, the reed mats, the few clay dishes, the olive-oil lamp, the stone weight, a crotched stick for a plow, a baked-clay chicken-coop, and perhaps one or two other objects, completed the effects of the Jew.

The Jew called himself the *Galutha*—the captive, yet he was seldom a slave, for he seems to have been as free as his captors. Possibly upon his first arrival he was compelled to labor upon the great constructions of Nebuchadnezzar, along with the captives of other nations, but not for long. Soon he acquired land of his own to cultivate. He raised barley, wheat, delicious melons and grapes; he collected from the desert truffles and licorice root; he planted and irrigated his date gardens, and between the rows of tall trees he raised pomegranates, oranges, figs, bananas, and vegetables of all sorts. Others were merchants, traveling up and down the canals to Babylon with the produce which they had purchased. A few were brokers and real-estate agents, caring for the property of their clients, and renting their land and houses for so many *mana* of silver or *kas* of dates. Some were jewelers, hammering out the rings of gold, silver, and bronze for the fingers, ears, and nose, not only for the Babylonian women, but for their own wives and daughters. A few were slaves, bought and sold as any other property. He acquired property, paid his tax in produce, lived wherever he chose; probably the only galling restriction placed upon him was the prohibition to leave the country for his native land. He was allowed the free exercise of his religion, and scrupulously spent the Sabbath with the rabbi of his community, piously bewailing his fate and his absence from Jerusalem. From an article in the *Sunday-School Times,* by *Dr. Edgar James Banks.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

The unconquerable people are Christ's conquerable folk. *C. Sylvester Horne.*

Sufferings are lessons. *Greek Saying.*

The moment we forget that God meant this life to be a school, the puzzle of life begins. *Henry Drummond.*

It is only through discipline that we are fit for glorification. *Watkinson.*

The disciplines of life, rightly interpreted, are God's emancipators of the soul to higher, wider, more Christlike uses. *James Buckham.*

As for repealing the law of retribution we might as well undertake to repeal the law of gravitation. *William R. Huntington.*

Sin can never be judged by its immediate effects, for it is a seed sown, and you have yet to learn what it will yield in the reaping time. *Marcus Dods.*

The failures narrated in the Books of the Kings were stepping-stones to the advent of The King. *F. B. Meyer.*

> He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck
> Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Prov. 29.1.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

"It takes a David and a Solomon to rear a temple, but a Zedekiah can overthrow it."

God punishes wrong-doing to-day as well as in Old Testament times. He makes the way of the transgressor hard in order to make him turn to the way of the righteous.

"The Man without a Country" in Dr. Hale's story utters no complaint; he knows that he deserves his fate, he is but reaping the harvest of the seed he has sown. So the people of Judah had the bitter knowledge that their exile was the just punishment for their sins. So many an exile from God to-day knows that he is responsible for all his woes.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. Jerusalem taken by the Chaldeans, 1-3. II. Flight and fate of Zedekiah, 4-7. III. Fate of the city and the people, 8-10. IV. Jeremiah and Ebed-melech spared, 11-18.

We have come to the tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar's army had been besieging the city for eighteen months and at last their battering-rams broke down a section of the wall, and Babylonian princes took up their position in the middle gate.

By night Zedekiah and his warriors fled toward the valley of the Jordan, but were pursued and overtaken by the Chaldeans. Zedekiah was captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. There he was condemned to see his son slain before him and his own eyes were put out, and he was bound in chains to be taken captive to Babylon. The nobles of Judah were slain.

After burning the temple, palace, and the finest houses of Jerusalem, breaking down its walls, and arranging to have left in the fields and vineyards the poorer people and the inhabitants of the towns outside of Jerusalem who had earlier yielded to the Chaldeans, Nebuzaradan returned to Babylon taking with him into exile the majority of the people. Gedaliah, the son of Jeremiah's friend Ahikam, was made governor of the cities of Judah with headquarters at Mizpah.

In the confusion of the capture of Jerusalem Jeremiah was taken bound as far as Ramah, but Nebuchadnezzar bade Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, permit him to choose whether he would go to Babylon in honor, or return to Judah. He chose to return. Later Gedaliah was treacherously slain by a prince of the house of David; and the survivors, fearing the vengeance of the Babylonians, fled to Egypt. Jeremiah was forced against his will to go with them. Tradition says that in Egypt he was martyred by his countrymen.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Calamities that have been blessings.
2. Reasons for the results of the Exile.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of Judah carried to Babylon in the Reign of Hezekiah.

(Assign work for the review).

LESSON X—SEPTEMBER 3

REVIEW

Golden Text

**Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it. Ps. 34.14.**

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Isaiah 37.14-38. Isaiah's Prophecy Concerning Sennacherib. Isaiah 52.13—53.12. The Suffering Servant of Jehovah. **T.** 2 Chron. 33.1-20. Manasseh's Wickedness and Penitence. 2 Chron. 34.1-13. Josiah's Devotion to God. **W.** 2 Chron. 34.14-33. The Finding of the Book of the Law. **T.** Jer. 26.1-24. Jeremiah Tried and Acquitted. **F.** Jer. 36.1-32. Jehoiakim Burns the Prophet's Book. **S.** Jer. 37.1-21. Jeremiah Cast into Prison. **S.** Jer. 39.1-18. Judah Carried Captive to Babylon. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH FROM THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH TO THE CAPTIVITY

Outline for the Blackboard

I Pride, 21-25.
Prophecy, 26-35.
Performance, 36.

II Sublimity, 13-15.
Sacrifice, 1-9.
Satisfaction, 10-12.

III Iniquity, 1-9.
Imprisonment, 10,11.
Improvement, 12-17.

IV Reforms, 1-7.
Repairs, 8-11.
Righteousness, 12-13.

V Discovery, 14-18.
Distress, 19-21.
Devotion, 29-33.

VI Accusation, 1-11.
Answer, 12-15.
Acquittal, 16-19.

VII Consumed, 20-26.
Composed, 27,28,32.
Condemned, 29-31.

VIII Ill-news, 4-10.
Imprisonment, 11-15.
Interview, 16-21.

IX Catastrophe, 1-3.
Capture, 4-6.
Captivity, 7-10.

Let nine pupils prepare and recite a brief review of a different lesson. In small classes assign two or more lessons to each pupil. After each lesson is told, write its outline on the blackboard and question about it.

A REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

A Blackboard Review. Call for sentences from each lesson that refer to the Golden Text for the Quarter—Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. After writing a sentence on the blackboard ask for the chief person and the chief fact of the lesson.

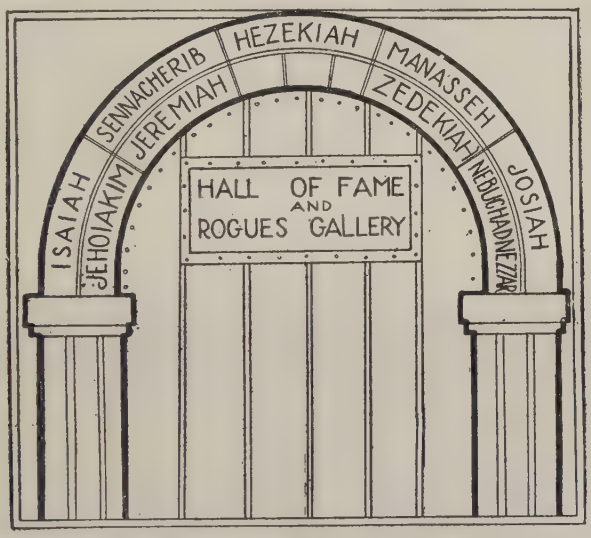
I. Thou hast defied Jehovah.
II. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.
III. He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah.
IV. While he was yet young he began to seek after God.
V. The king made a covenant before Jehovah to walk after Jehovah and to keep his commandments.
VI. Amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God.

VII. He would not hear them.
VIII. Wherein have I sinned against thee or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?
IX. Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people.

Chief Persons	Chief Facts
I. Isaiah, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Jehovah.	A Great Prophecy.
II. Servant of Jehovah.	A Great Sacrifice.
III. Manasseh.	Great Wickedness.
IV. Josiah.	Great Goodness.
V. Hilkiah, Shaphan, Josiah, People.	A Great Discovery.
VI. Jeremiah, Priests, Prophets and Princes and People.	A Great Trial.
VII. Jehoiakim, Jehudi, Jeremiah.	A Great Writing.
VIII. Jeremiah, Chaldean Army, Irijah, Zedekiah.	A Great Injustice.
IX. Zedekiah, Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzaradan, People.	A Great Captivity.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

In the outline of this diagram, which has been reproduced on the blackboard, write each name as a five-minute talk upon that character announced from some one appointed for the talk the week beforehand.



A REVIEW FOR LITTLE FOLKS

Have the pictures on the next page copied upon board or cardboard large enough to be easily seen by all the class. Each square should be covered with its own square of paper fastened on by pin or thumb tack. Remove one paper at a time and question your pupils about the lesson the picture recalls.

A REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

For what lesson of the Quarter would each of these verses be appropriate as Golden Texts?

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I Jn. 1.9.

·DEPART · FROM · EVIL · AND · DO · GOOD ·
Refuge
GOD
Strength
·SEEK · PEACE · AND · PVRSVE · IT ·

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,
That seek him with the whole heart. Ps. 119.2.

I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah and have not kept his statutes. Amos 2.4.

Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Isa. 41.10.

If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life. Rev. 22.19.

Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by those stripes ye were healed. 1 Pet. 2.24.

With us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles. 2 Ch. 32.8.

Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found. Isa. 55.6.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mat. 5.10.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

Tell the lesson story suggested by the allusions in these selections. (For a written review, write several copies of each quotation on separate slips of paper and let your pupils each draw one. As soon as a pupil has answered his question, let him draw another. Announce next Sunday the one who did the best).

Sing ye praises through the land; the Lord with his right hand,
With his mighty arm hath gotten himself the victory now.
He hath scattered their forces, both the riders and their horses,
There is none that fighteth for us, O God, but only Thou.
Cecil F. Alexander.

With bonds, and scorn, and evil will
The world requires its prophets still. *Whittier.*

The king praying was freer in his chains than ever he had been in his prosperity: the king humbling himself before God was higher than when, in the pride of his heart, he shut God out from it. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Thy unblemished Body on the Tree
Was bared and broken to atone
For me, for me
Thy little one. *Christina Rossetti.*

The Vulgate, with its mutilations and excisions, is a standing evidence that Jehudi's penknife survived his age. *F. B. Meyer.*

He is a young man who turns not aside to the right hand or to the left from a course that is wholly honorable.

He who has lost hold of God altogether does evil more than did the nations whom God destroyed before the children of Israel, for they held to God with the rotten thread of idolatry.

Where now the haughty empire that was spread
With such fond hope? Her very speech is dead. *Wordsworth.*

We are but poor judges of form or comeliness, and what is lustrous with perfect beauty in God's eyes may be, and generally is, plain and dowdy in men's. *Alexander Maclaren.*

The Nebuchadnezzars are God's axes with which He hews down fruitless trees. They are responsible for their acts, but they are His instruments, and it is His hand that wields them. *Alexander Maclaren.*

One man dictates, another writes, a third carries the roll. The human agency is manifold. A single copy of the Holy Scriptures represents almost every possible energy of the mind of many, from the highest intellectual effort in translation, to such simple acts as typefounding and book-binding. Yet the result is always unity, and declares itself with indisputable force the Word of God. *J. R. Gillies.*

For all rearing of the true temple, harps of praise are no less necessary than

swords and trowels, and we shall do no right work for God or man unless we do it with melody in our hearts. Our lives must be full of music if we are to lay even one stone in the temple. *Alexander Maclaren.*

QUESTIONS FOR A WRITTEN REVIEW

For Younger Pupils. Write these questions upon separate slips of paper, as many of each as may be necessary for your class. Let each pupil answer as many as he can in the time allowed.

1. Who were the good kings of this Quarter's lessons?
2. What great event occurred in Hezekiah's reign?
3. Who was Sennacherib? Who was the friend of king Hezekiah at the time of Sennacherib's invasion?
4. What kind of king was Hezekiah?
5. What was Manasseh's sin? Who told him that he was doing wrong?
6. What did Isaiah say about the Savior who was to come?
7. What happened when the temple was being repaired during Josiah's reign?
8. To what two kings was the word of God read? How did each receive the reading?
9. What king destroyed the roll of Jeremiah? Why?
10. What did Jeremiah do when his roll was destroyed?
11. What prophet was imprisoned? Why? How was he released?
12. Who was the last king of Judah?
13. What was the date of the capture of Jerusalem?
14. To what place were most of the people of Jerusalem taken?
15. How long did the Captivity last?
16. What history is covered by Second Chronicles?
17. What prophetical books have we studied this quarter?
18. What can you tell about each?

For Older Pupils.

1. Who was the ruler of Judah at the time of Sennacherib's invasion? What prophet foretold the result of the Assyrian invasion? How is it true that God fights our battles?
2. What incidents in Christ's life fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant?
3. What were Josiah's reforms and why did they have no permanent effect?
4. In whose reign did Jeremiah live?
5. What persecutions did Jeremiah suffer?
6. When was Jerusalem taken? By whom? Who was then king?
7. In what book are the sufferings of the siege of Jerusalem related? (Lamentations.)
8. In what year was Samaria taken? By whom?
9. How many kings were there in Israel, of how many dynasties, and how long did the kingdom last? (19 kings; 9 dynastics, 215 years.)
10. How many kings were there in Judah, of how many dynasties, and how long did that kingdom last? (19 kings, (one queen), one dynasty, 350 years.)
11. What good kings and what evil kings of each kingdom can you mention?
12. Draw a map of Western Asia showing Assyria and Palestine, and trace the route of the captives from Jerusalem to Babylon.
13. What history is covered by Second Chronicles?
14. What can you say about Isaiah as a poet and an orator?
15. What period is covered by the Book of Isaiah? What views are held as to its composition?
16. Name several characteristics of the Book of Jeremiah.
17. What are the leading teachings of Jeremiah?
18. What was the result of his mission?

SUBJECTS FOR WRITTEN WORK TO BE BROUGHT TO CLASS

For Younger Pupils.

1. Tell the story of a man who thought that by burning God's book he could get rid of God's laws.

2. The story of a king that was alarmed by the reading of a book and of another king who was angered by the reading of a similar book.
3. The story of a king who did wickedly and repented and of another king who always did what was right.
4. The story of an innocent man who was put in prison and cruelly treated.
5. The story of the destruction of a beautiful city and the fate of its people.

For Older Pupils.

1. Menasseh's sin and repentance and Josiah's good reign as typical reigns in Judah's history.
2. Josiah's and Jehoiakim's treatment of the Word of God.
3. The personal history of Jeremiah during the siege of Jerusalem.
4. How the Book of Jeremiah was written.
5. The character of Hezekiah.
6. The character of Zedekiah.
7. The Prophet Jeremiah.
8. The Prophet Isaiah.
9. The Book of Isaiah.
10. An outline of Second Chronicles.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What can you learn about the Book of Daniel? (Bible dictionaries, clipping, p. 36.) 2. In whose reign was Daniel taken to Babylon? (Dan. 1.1.) 3. What lessons have we had about this king? 4. What were the Jewish names of the four youths, and what were the new names given them? (Dan. 1.6, 7.) 5. When was Cyrus made king? (Bible dictionaries, or clipping, p. 347.) 6. What can you learn about the magicians and enchanters of Babylon? (Clipping, p. 347.) 7. Find out what you can about the effect upon the body and mind of wine and sumptuous food. (Clipping, p. 351.)

Questions to think about. 1. Why did Daniel regard the king's meat and drink as defiling? (Clipping, p. 347.) 2. Do you think that if Daniel lived in our city he would smoke cigarettes? 3. What lessons can you learn from Daniel's words and action? 4. What can you tell about "Plain living and high thinking"? 5. What other Old Testament heroes, strangers in a strange land, excelled the native people in their wisdom? (Moses, Joseph.)

Note-Book Work. In your Book of the Kings of Judah write an account of the Destruction of Jerusalem in the Reign of Zedekiah.

LESSON XI—SEPTEMBER 10

DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS
(Temperance Lesson)

Golden Text

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. Rom. 14.21.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Dan. 1.8-20. Daniel and his Companions. **T.** Dan. 1.1-7. The Temptations of Daniel and his Companions. **W.** Jer. 35.1-19. The Fidelity of the Rechabites. **T.** Rom. 14.13-23. Refusing to Eat Flesh and Drink Wine. **F.** 1 Cor. 8.1-13. Not Causing my Brother to Stumble. **S.** Gal. 5.13-26. Crucifying the Flesh with the Passions thereof. **S.** Rom. 13.1-14. Walking not in Reveling and Drunkenness. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Dan. 1.8-20 COMMIT vv. 8,9

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god: and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god. 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in certain of the children of Israel, even of the seed royal and of the nobles; 4 youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace: and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's dainties, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be nourished three years; that at the end thereof they should stand before the king. 6 Now among these were, of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 And the prince of the eunuchs gave names unto them: unto Daniel he gave *the name of* Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, *of* Shadrach; and to Mishael, *of* Meshach; and to Azariah, *of* Abed-nego.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king. 11 Then said Daniel to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties. 16 So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

17 Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and

dreams. 18 And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

8. *Purposed in his heart.* Resolved.—*Would not defile himself.* The king's dainties might have been offered in sacrifice to idols, or might not have been prepared according to Jewish laws, or might have been the flesh of animals held by the Jews to be unclean. See the law in Dt. 12.23,24; Lev. 11.4-20.—*The wine which he drank.* Part of the king's wine might have been offered in sacrifice to idols. Compare Paul's solution of a similar difficulty, 1 Cor. 10.20,27-29.—*The prince of the eunuchs.* Ashpenaz, v. 3.

9. "Compare, though the expressions are different, the similar case of Joseph, Gen. 29.21" (*Driver*).

10. *The king who hath appointed your food and your drink.* Verse 5.

11. *The steward.* Heb. *Hammelzar,* RVm.

12. *Prove.* Test.—*Ten days.* A round number.—*Pulse.* Or, *herbs,* RVm. "Rather, vegetable food. Compare Is. 61.11 where almost the same word is rendered 'the things that are sown,' *i. e.* vegetable products" (*Driver*).

17. *God gave them knowledge.* They were industrious students, but the gift came none the less from God, as do all good things.—*Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.* See Chapter 2.

18. *At the end of the days.* Three years, v. 5.—*Appointed.* Heb. *said,* RVm.

19. *Communed.* Talked.—*Therefore stood they before the king.* Served him as his attendants.

21. *Unto the first year of king Cyrus.* Cyrus king of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B. C., some sixty-six years after the third year of Jehoiakim, verse 1: the expression means that Daniel lived throughout the duration of the Chaldean Empire. According to Dan. 10.1, he was still living in the third year of Cyrus.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

8. *He would not defile himself.* The Jews, especially in later times, attached great importance to the dietary laws, and were also very scrupulous in avoiding acts which, even indirectly, might seem to imply the recognition of a heathen deity. Antiochus Epiphanes, in his endeavor (168 B. C.) to Hellenize the Jews, sought to compel them both to sacrifice to heathen deities and to partake of unclean food; and resistance to his edict was a point on which the utmost stress was laid by the royal Jews... Josephus speaks of certain priests who, being sent to Rome, partook on religious grounds of nothing but figs and nuts. For the abrogation of the principle, in the new dispensation, see Mk. 7.19; Acts 10.9-16. *S. R. Driver,* in *Cambridge Bible.*

In the Second Book of Maccabees we are told that on the king's birthday Jews "were constrained by bitter constraint to eat of the sacrifices," and that Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, an aged and noble-looking man, preferred rather to be tortured to death, "leaving his death for an example of noble courage, and a memorial of value, not only unto young men, but unto all his nation." In the following chapter is the celebrated story of the constancy and cruel death of seven brothers and their mother, when they preferred martyrdom to tasting swine's flesh. The brave Judas Maccabæus, with some nine companions, withdrew himself into the wilderness, and "lived in the mountains after the manner of beasts with his company, who fed on herbs continually, lest they should be partakers of the pollution." The tone and object of these narrations are precisely the same as the tone and object of the stories in the Book of Daniel. *F. W. Farrar,* in *The Book of Daniel.*

20. *The magicians and enchanters in his realm.* Babylon was the land of

magic; and a very extensive literature, dealing with different branches of the subject, has been brought to light during recent years. Demons, or evil spirits, were supposed to be active upon earth, bringing to mankind diseases, misfortunes, and every kind of ill; the heavens were supposed to exercise an influence over the destinies of men and nations. Methods had to be devised for the purpose of dealing with the occult agencies concerned, of interpreting all significant phenomena, and of averting, where this was held to be possible, the evils which they portended. Sorcerers and sorceresses sprang up, who, by means of various magical devices, could invoke the demons at their will, and bring such persons as they chose within their power. On the other hand, priests were ready with means for protecting people who were thus assailed; and many collections of "incantations" have come down to us, each dealing with some particular kind of demonic evil, or providing some particular method of protection against demons. "Fully one-fourth of the portion of Asshurbanipal's library that has been discovered consists of omen-tablets of various sizes in which explanations are afforded of all physical peculiarities to be observed in animals and men, of natural phenomena, of the position and movements of the planets and stars, of the incidents and accidents of public and private life—in short, of all possible occurrences and situations. *S. R. Driver,* in *The Book of Daniel.*

A Chaldæan Diviner

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

8. *He would not defile himself with the king's dainties nor with the wine which he drank.* Athenæus, who lived about 200 A. D., calls the animals that were served at the tables of the Persian kings *victims,* because they were first offered as victims to their gods, and further says that the Persian kings (the Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian) were accustomed to order the food left at their own tables delivered to their courtiers.

In Jewish quarters on the door or window of a restaurant there is sometimes seen to-day the word *Kosher* in English or Hebrew letters, which means that all the food served there has been prepared according to the strict requirements of Deuteronomy.

19. *They stood before the king.* There are three thousand slaves who live in the palace, and attend the person of the shah wherever he goes. They are promising boys, stolen or forcibly taken from their Christian parents, and brought up as Moslems. They are kept in the seraglio, under strict discipline, receive a good education, and then have appointments in the civil or military service. *Van Lennep* in *Bible Lands.*

A Babylonian Evil Spirit

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Prof. Richard G. Moulton fittingly says: The history of Israel is in the position of a river which runs for a time underground before it returns to view. There is no Bible narrative of the Exile: we know indirectly that the Captivity continues for some seventy years (from the earlier Captivity) without break; also, that in the interval the Babylonian conquerors are themselves conquered, and their dominions pass into the hands of the Medes and Persians. But the several stories of the Exiles cast their brilliant light upon successive

AN ASSYRIAN PALACE

Reconstructed by Layard

points in the life of the Captivity. Nowhere is the charm of story greater than in the books of Daniel and of Esther. Through these impressive narratives we are able to see how even in their exile the chosen people continue to witness for their God among the nations.

The place of our lesson is at the royal court in Babylon, in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, but earlier than the reign of Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem. It was in the reign of Jehoiakim of Judah that the boy Daniel was carried away captive to the city of Babylon; Dan. 1.1.

For the two interpretations of the Book of Daniel see p. 36.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

These stories from the book of Daniel are so interesting for your pupils that no suggestions for teaching are necessary. The Suggestion for Beginning the Lesson given for Younger Pupils is adapted to your needs. Present Daniel as a moral hero, and teach the lesson drawn by Rabbi Singer, p. 350. Call for the stanza of the well-known song:

Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known.

Ask your pupils how they feel before dinner, after the usual meal, after a Thanksgiving feast, and lead them to say that just enough is far better than too much. Teach this stanza:

God gave me this good body,
To grow both strong and tall;
Tobacco helps to spoil it,
And so does alcohol.
Into my mouth they'll never go;
When tempted, I will answer "no."

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. A Jewish rabbi of England was one day talking to a group of Jewish boys and girls, and this is part of what he told them. You must never be afraid of being Jews, or of being known as being Jews. The only thing you need be afraid of is being bad Jews. The other day I heard a story at one of the great hospitals. Two little girls came in together to see two sick people who were in one of the wards. A nurse went up to them and said to the one, "What is your name?" "Mary." "And what church do you belong to?" "The Church of England." "Well," she said, "you may thank God for that." And then she saw the other who was standing by. "What is your name?" "Sarah." "Oh," she said, "you are a Jewess." "Yes," answered the little girl, "and I thank God for that." It wasn't said saucily, you know, but nicely and quite respectfully, but firmly as if she felt that it would be mean to deny it—that it was something to be indeed proud of and grateful to God for. And the nurse wasn't at all angry. She was a heroine herself; most nurses are brave and good as well as kind. And being brave herself, she loved this brave little girl and said to her: "Yes, thank God for it, and show your thanks by being true to it."

In the court of great king Nebuchadnezzar in the times we are studying there were four Jewish boys who, like this little girl, were among people who were not Jews, and they, too, were not afraid of being Jews or of being known as Jews, but only of being bad Jews. What were their names?

For Older Pupils. Is it always right to do right? Is it always right to do what we think is right? Suppose others declare that we are mistaken in our sense of what is right; should we yield to what they advise when we can not see the matter as they do? Is it right to do what we think is wrong under circumstances where we are persuaded we can not help ourselves? Can a Christian in business say that a certain course is right, but he cannot follow it because all his competitors do the opposite? Is it ever necessary to sin? (After a discussion of Daniel's situation and the principle involved, see topic I, and a

talk about the way he gained his point, ask your pupils whether it would have been right for Daniel, instead of having the way which he thought was right proved, to have said to himself that he would try the way which he thought was wrong and see how it turned out.)

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Fidelity to Principle

The Example of the Four Boys. These boys must have been about fourteen years old at this time. What strength of character, what earnest religious natures the lads possessed! They remained true to their convictions of right, steadfast in their allegiance to the Lord, under circumstances which might have seemed to excuse a contrary course. How easily they might have argued, that in that foreign court they must do as they were bid, that it would be useless to refuse the king's food, that they could only yield to the inevitable!

The question which was to these lads a matter of conscience was in regard to a ceremonial rule. They believed it a sacred duty to keep this rule, and therefore not to have kept it would have been for them a sin. It is evil for that man who eateth with offense said Paul. They shall eat unclean things in Assyria, Hosea had prophesied. The principle at stake, too, was greater than the keeping of one law alone. The king had changed not only their food but their dress, their studies, their very names. Daniel meant "God is my judge," his new name Belteshazzar, "May Beltis (a Babylonian goddess) defend the king." Everything was done to make these youths forget their nationality and their religion. Had they yielded in the matter of eating meat sacrificed to idols, they would have been renouncing Jehovah their God for the false gods of Babylon.

As regards the ceremonial defilement we in these days agree with Paul, who says: "I am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself"; but we may well profit by the splendid example of fidelity to principle given by these lads. It was this same fidelity for which General Lee was noted. General Grant after Appomattox urged General Lee to adopt a certain course which he believed would be for the good of all. General Lee did not believe in doing this, and General Grant says in his Memoirs, "I knew there was no use to urge him to do anything against his ideas of what was right."

A Man of Firm Principle. Mr. Hamilton Fish, the distinguished statesman, was noted for his courteous and modest bearing, and also for the firmness of his devotion to principle. A story told in the New York *Christian Advocate* illustrates all these noble characteristics. During his official life in Washington at a dinner given by him in honor of an eminent guest, one of those present was a United States Senator, formerly a Christian man, who had become almost irreligious. He enjoyed telling stories in a rather boisterous way, with irreverent references to Christianity. In illustrating a point he wished to make he told one of these stories.

Mr. Fish listened with an expression of astonishment and disapproval that ought to have had its influence. On the other hand, it seemed to incite the senator to still further discourtesy. Mr. Fish at length said quietly: "Senator—, pardon me, but I must request you to desist. I firmly believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Of His church I am a member; in my house I have tried to honor Him, and in His faith I expect to die; and it is painful to me to hear you speak in this way." His manner was so courteous that it was impossible to take offense, and there were no more vulgar jokes or anecdotes derogatory to religion at the secretary's table.

The Heroism God asks of All Boys and Girls. Every one of you will at some time or other be called upon to show courage and heroism, in having to say, when occasion demands, a very simple word very distinctly and very decisively—the word "No." How much wretchedness and ruin have been brought into the homes and hearts of men and women, and of boys and girls, because they could not say that word, or because they said it in a half-hearted way, so that it sounded very much like "Yes," and in the end was really turned into "Yes." Learn early to guard yourselves against evil companionship and evil example, and when the temptation comes to you, as come it will, to sin against

God's law, be it in matters of truthfulness, or of honesty, or of purity, or of love and gentleness—the moment your conscience whispers "No," let your lips take up the message and proclaim aloud, clearly as with trumpet notes, "No!" Does this seem to you but a mild and weakly form of heroism? It is just what God expects of you, because it is within the range of your powers. Do not underrate what you can do, as boys and girls, because it appears to you little in comparison with what you have heard of the world's renowned heroes and heroines. God asks of us exactly what we can do. He asks of us not according to His measure, but according to our measure. *Simeon Singer,* in *Sermons to Children.*

II Temperance Topic A Sound Mind and a Sound Body

Mens Sana in Corpore Sano. The young men who gave up wine and dainties for water and plain fare were strong both physically and intellectually. Their fine appearance was noteworthy, and best of all, not only were they fairer and healthier for their abstinence, but their brains were clearer and they had more knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.

The result of the experiment was no surprise to them. This morning's paper contains an account of an experiment made in the village of Hickington, England, which was a surprise to the drinkers themselves. Some of the villagers were so goaded by the taunts of the keepers of the beer-houses because of their Liberal political opinions, that they formed a league among themselves to boycott the beer-houses for twelve months. At the end of a week the keepers of seven out of the eight beer-houses found that they would have to give up their business, and the advantages to pocket and health of the abstainers were evidently so great that many others of their fellow-villagers joined them. Almost the whole village are now members of "the Workmen's Temperance League," as it is now called, for its political character has been lost sight of in its temperance interest.

All the world knows that food and drink wonderfully affect body and mind, that intoxicating drinks and sumptuous diet are harmful to both. Insurance companies have proved this; their tables show that intemperate habits shorten life. Physicians not only see the direct ravages made on the body by excessive eating and drinking, but they know that it is more difficult to cure a moderate drinker of disease not traceable to drink than it is a total abstainer. Dr. Woods Hutchinson, in "A Physician's Straight Talk on Alcohol" in the *Sunday School Times,* says: "An amount of alcohol which one man might seem to consume with impunity may be seriously injurious to another; and a daily consumption which will produce not the slightest symptom of intoxication, or even of discomfort, or headache, may be slowly and fatally damaging the cells of your liver or kidneys. The conviction is growing among pathologists that the tissues of many moderate drinkers are damaged in this slow, insidious way, without their being in the slightest degree conscious of any injury or even discomfort. You never can quite tell what alcohol has done to you until the post-mortem—and then the question won't interest you much."

His words recall a conversation at a railway station when an anxious man came to the door of the baggage-car and asked, "Is there anything for me?" The baggage-master dragged out a demijohn of whisky and handed it to him. "Anything more?" asked the man. "Yes," said the baggageman, "here's a grave-stone. There's no name on it, but it ought to go with that liquor."

It is not with the body only that drink works havoc. It weakens the mental powers, dulls the conscience, and hardens the spiritual life. Excess in eating produces dulness of brain and sluggishness of will power. To quote again from Dr. Hutchinson: "In spite of the many praises of wine which have been sung by poets and chanted by musicians, and painted by artists, no first-class creation of the imagination, or even good second-class, in either poetry, music or painting, was ever either conceived or executed under the influence of alcohol. Similarly, any practiced after-dinner speaker will tell you that while it is much easier to make a speech which your audience will think brilliant, witty and graceful if they have imbibed a moderate amount of champagne, is a very different matter if you have taken half that amount of champagne yourself. Any feeble little conceit will sound exceedingly witty and funny when

you are "exhilarated," but the kind of things that you say when you are drunk—! "When the wine's in the wit's out," describes them exactly.

"Drinking makes thinking impossible," says the Scottish reformer. "Some day thinking will make drinking impossible."

A Great Foe to Young Minds and Bodies. "I am not much of a mathematician," some one makes the cigarette say, "but I can add to a youth's nervous troubles; I can subtract from his physical energy, I can multiply his aches and pains, I can divide his mental powers, I can take interest from his work, and discount his chances for success."

III The Beauty of Courtesy

How not to do it. Those in charge of the young men were not forcing upon them anything that they considered wrong. They were treating them in the way they thought best. Suppose Daniel had said to the prince of the eunuchs, "I won't eat this food;" would that official not have answered, "You will eat this food or you can starve?" When this man had explained to Daniel his responsibility and his belief that his youths would lose by a simpler diet, Daniel said no more to him. What would have happened had he persisted with a man who could not be persuaded? Instead, he went to the steward who had the matter in charge, and proposed a sensible thing. He made the time limit of the test long enough to prove whether or not he was right, and not so long as to make it seem to the steward a dangerous experiment. Please try it and see how it works, he evidently said, and his way of asking the favor won.

At the end of the time Daniel's countenance was fair, the Bible record says. It had the beauty of which Emerson speaks: "I have seen manners that make a similar impression with personal beauty; that give the like exhilaration, and refine us like that; and in memorable experiences, they are better than beauty, and make that superfluous and ugly. But they must be marked by fine perception, the acquaintance with real beauty. They must always show self-control; you shall not be facile, apologetic, or leaky, but king over your word; and every gesture and action shall indicate power at rest. Then they must be inspired by the good heart. There is no beautifier of the complexion, or form, or behavior, like the wish to scatter joy, and not pain, around us."

Two Lessons in Courtesy. "Senator Hoar's gentle breeding was a delight to all who came in contact with him, and a lesson to many who had found less than the necessary time for acquiring a habit of kindly action," the Washington *Star* remarked, in giving the following incident: "One forenoon in his last year he sent his card to a bureau chief who was noted for self-importance and bad manners. The messenger conducted Senator Hoar into the chief's sumptuously appointed room. The chief sat at his desk, facing the door; but he neither raised his head when the Senator entered, nor replied to his 'Good morning!'

"The Senator halted half-way from the door to the desk, and an expression of surprise came over his face. He waited patiently three or four minutes, but the bureau chief, taking no notice of him, scratched busily away at some papers. At last the Senator passed round to the opposite side of the big square desk at which the chief was writing, pulled up a chair, sat down, drew to him a block of writing paper and also began to write.

"Then the bureau chief looked up with an expression of well-simulated surprise. 'O, h'w are you, Senator?' he said, as if he had just discovered him. 'Anything I c'n do for you?'

"Senator Hoar looked up pleasantly from his writing. 'No, sir,' he said complacently. 'I dropped in only to write a few letters. Don't put yourself out. Proceed with your work,' and he went on with his own.

"The bureau chief looked somewhat crestfallen. He wheeled around sidewise in his chair and drummed on the desk. 'By the way, Senator,' he said, 'about that little matter you submitted to the department a while ago, we—'

"'Oh, never mind,' said the Senator, calmly. 'It's a rather irksome case. I'm going to see the Secretary about it as soon as I finish these letters. Pray don't let it bother you at all.' The chief flushed and bent over his desk again. Senator Hoar went calmly ahead with his correspondence for a quarter of an hour, then summoned the messenger and sent his card to the Secretary.

"The Secretary's office was two doors down the hall. In less than a minute the

chief's door was thrown open and the Secretary himself plunged in, both hands extended toward the Senator. 'The top of the morning to you, Senator!' he cried. 'You're just the man I have been wanting to see. I want to have a long talk with you. Messenger, tell the rest of the people waiting that I shall be busy with Senator Hoar for at least an hour,' and he conducted the Senator into his inner office.

"A little more than an hour later, after the Senator's departure, the Secretary summoned the bureau chief to his office. When the chief came back to his own desk, the old colored messenger, himself a 'graduate of more courteous times,' grunted with silent approval.

"'Yasseh,' he said, when asked about the incident, 'he done got two lessons. Fust, Senatah Hoar show him how a gemman gwine ac', an' den de Sec'at'y done tole him how he got to ac' whetheh he gemman o' not.'"

SENTENCE SERMONS

Whatever people may think of you, do that which you think to be right. *Pythagoras.*

Bodily enjoyment depends upon health, and health upon temperance. *Thales.*

No form of deterioration is to-day more surely handicapping the boys than the cigarette habit. *Frances Willard.*

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. 5.21.

The only conclusive evidence of a man's sincerity is that he gives himself for a principle. Words, money, all things else, are comparatively easy to give away; but when a man makes a gift of his daily life and practice, it is plain that the truth, whatever it may be, has taken possession of him. *J. R. Lowell.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

It is said that statistics from the alcoholic wards of the hospitals show that two-thirds of the patients took their first drink, not because they felt any craving for it, or even thought it would taste good, but because they saw others doing it—thought it a manly thing to do, or were afraid they would be laughed at if they didn't. Daniel's example shows the true manliness and courage.

One-eighth of the adults in Denmark belong to total abstinence unions. When you boys are all adults, what will be the proportion here?

These four boys were away from the restraints of home, but they remained true to home principles. They showed their colors at the first. It is always easier to take the right stand in the beginning than it is to shift afterwards.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Importance of early training. 2. Has alcohol any food value?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the whole chapter. 2. How did it happen that these Jews were "appointed over the affairs of the province"? (Read the second chapter.) 3. What words in the chapter show that those who accused the Jews to the king were jealous? (3.12.) 4. What were the Hebrew names of these men, and why were they changed? (Dan. 1.6, 7 and clipping, p. 355.)

Questions to think about. 1. Where was Daniel? (Clipping, p. 356.) 2. What did the king mean by his question, Is it of purpose, verse 14? 3. What can be said for and against the British taking charge of the processions in India in honor of the god Juggernaut? 4. Should a watchman risk his life in guarding property or an officer in guarding a prisoner? 5. Does God always save from death those who serve Him? 6. Has good always come from the sufferings of martyrs? 7. During this week try to see what opportunities you have in your daily life for acts of moral courage, and what morally courageous deeds you can notice or read about.

Note-book and Memory Work. Begin a new book entitled "The Jews during and after the Exile." Write the title "Daniel and his Companions at the Court of Babylon." Write Part I: The Temperance Test.

LESSON XII—SEPTEMBER 17

DANIEL'S COMPANIONS IN THE FIERY FURNACE

Golden Text

The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb. 13.6.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Dan. 3.1-30. Daniel's Companions in the Fiery Furnace. **T.** Job. 5.17-27. "He will Deliver thee in Six Troubles." **W.** Ps. 27.1-14. The Lord is my Salvation. Whom shall I Fear? **T.** Isaiah 26. 1-10. "Thou wilt Keep him in Perfect Peace." **F.** Jer. 1.1-10. "I Am with thee to Deliver thee." **S.** Jer. 15.11-21. "I Am with thee to Save thee." **S.** Ps. 9. 1-14. "Thou, O Lord, hast not Forsaken them." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Dan. 3 PRINT vv. 13-28 COMMIT vv. 17.18

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said unto them, Is it of purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that ye serve not my god, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, *well:* but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be *so,* our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, *and* to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their breeches, their tunics, and their mantles, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste: he spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace: he spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth out of the midst of the fire. 27 And the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their breeches changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them.

28 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

13. *Then.* Read 3.1-12.—*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.* They had been appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, 2.49, and it was the jealous Chaldeans under them who reported the matter to the king, 3.8-12.

14. *Is it of purpose.* The king gives them a chance to explain their attitude. Compare our expression "was it with malice of forethought."

15. *Sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer.* See p. 356.—*Well.* This word is not in the original; the construction is called in rhetoric aposiopesis: a figure of speech in which the speaker breaks off suddenly.—*A burning fiery furnace.* Jeremiah 29. 22, speaks of those "whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."

16. *We have no need. We are not careful,* RVm.—*To answer thee in this matter.* To answer his question of "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" They imply that the king already knew the power of their God.

17. *If it be so.* Or, *behold, our God,* etc. Or, *If our God whom we serve be able to deliver us He will deliver us from...and out of thy hand, O king,* RVm. Dr. Prince suggests as a better translation: "If our God whom we serve exists, He is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and from thy hand, O king, He will deliver us. This is a defiant expression of the Hebrew's perfect faith in the power of their God which they make dependent on what is to them a certainty, *e. g.* His very existence."

18. *But if not.* In any case, even if He does not intervene to save us.—*We will not serve thy gods.* "Nebuchadnezzar's logic was only 'Do as I bid you, or burn,' and the sole possible reply was 'We will not do as you bid, and we will burn'" (*Maclaren*).

19. *His visage was changed.* His features were distorted with rage.—*Seven times more.* To the utmost intensity of heat.

21. *Breeches, tunics, mantles, and other garments.* "Wide trousers, fine linen shirts, precious garments, and robes of state." In the authorized version instead of *mantles* the word *hats* is given, and from this, it is said, George Fox the Quaker deduced his idea that men should remain covered in the presence of royalty.

22. *Took up.* To the opening on top of the mound. See p. 356.

24. *Rose up.* He had been seated where he could see his commands carried out.

25. *Loose.* Unbound.—*A son of the gods.* An appropriate comparison for a heathen king.

26. *Mouth.* Aramaic, *door,* RVm.

27. *The satrap...counsellors.* Verses 2 and 3.—The fire had no power over their bodies. Compare Isa. 43.2.—*Changed.* Damaged. "Especial stress is laid on the condition of this garment, because it was in all probability full and baggy like the modern Turkish and Persian trousers, and therefore more liable to be damaged by fire than any other article of their apparel" (*Prince*).

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

13. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.* Their very names were a witness not only to their nationality, but to their religion. Daniel means, "God is my judge"; Hananiah, "Jehovah is gracious"; Mishael (perhaps), "Who is equal to God?"; Azariah, "God is a helper."

It is hardly likely that the Chaldeans would have tolerated the use of such names among their young pupils, since every repetition of them would have sounded like a challenge to the supremacy of Bel, Merodach, and Nebo. It was a common thing to change names in heathen courts, as the name of Joseph had been changed by the Egyptians to Zaphnath-paaneah (Gen. 41.45) and the Assyrians changed the name of Psammetichus II into "Nebro-seriv-ani," "Nebo

save me." They therefore made the names of the boys echo the names of the Babylonian deities. Instead of "God is my judge," Daniel was called Belteshazzar, "Protect thou his life." Perhaps the prayer shows the tender regard in which he was held by Ashpenaz. Hananiah was called Shadrach, perhaps Shudur-aku, "Command of Aku," the moon-deity; Mishael was called Meshach, a name which we cannot interpret; and Azariah, instead of "God is a help," was called Abed-nego, a mistaken form for Abed-nebo, or "Servant of Nebo." *F. W. Farrar,* in *The Expositor's Bible.*

The question has often been asked, Where can Daniel himself have been during the time when that great gathering took place in the plain of Dura? He must certainly have been included among those who were required to be present. It is useless to speculate on such points, for there are no facts to build on. Ancient commentators conjecture that Daniel was sick, or absent on business of state. He may even have been present, as Hippolytus maintained, but not have been especially watched, because the assailants of the Jews preferred to begin by accusing persons of a lower position. When subordinate agents had been got out of the way, it would have been time enough to attack Daniel himself. The accusation against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego may, moreover, have been preferred on a sudden impulse; and the sentence of condemnation took effect so rapidly that it is conceivable that all may have been over before the matter came under the notice of Daniel. *Charles H. Wright,* in *Daniel and his Prophecies.*

18. *We will not serve thy gods.* Here were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note—a steadfast self-denying adherence to God and duty in lesser instance will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater. *Matthew Henry.*

Image of Nebo, whose temple Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt at Borsippa

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

15. *The cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer.* The difference between the horn and the cornet is supposed to have been in the shape, the latter having less of a curved shape than the former. The flute is supposed to have been like the pipe. The harp, Rawlinson says, "would seem to have resembled the later harp of the Assyrians, but it had fewer strings, if we may judge from a representation upon a cylinder. Like the Assyrian, it was carried under one arm and was played by both hands, one on either side of the strings." The sackbut Rawlinson supposes to have been a large harp resting on the ground like the harps of the Egyptians. A representation of the psaltery Rawlinson found on an Assyrian monument. It was a sort of dulcimer which was suspended from the neck of the musician, and projected horizontally from his waist. It consisted of a number of strings, not fewer than ten, stretched over a hollow case or sounding board. The dulcimer is variously thought to have been a lute, a crooked trumpet, a long drum, an organ, and a bag-pipe. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Customs.*

15. *A burning fiery furnace.* This is probably a pit in the ground, lined with stones or bricks, covered by a low mound with a vent on top, into which the men were thrown, with a grated gate on one side, through which the king could see the interior of the furnace. Burning alive, which has been in use as a punishment until quite a recent date in Persia, was one of the favorite methods of torture practiced on the Jews during the Seleucidan period. *Prince.*

19. *Heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated.* The

most savagely barbarous and therefore the most accomplished inquisitors, were those of Portugal, who had a peculiar machinery for prolonging the fiery torment, and they usually kept their victims alive under their hands for an hour and a half or two hours. In other countries, too, the inquisitors of the Church of Rome have roasted heretics to death by slow fires, or they have half burnt and half smothered them by a lingering process with green wood. Often, when the burning was checked by design or accident, the martyrs implored the executioners to give more fire, which the bystanders, in pity, would hasten to supply. When burnings have been despatched quickly the inquisitors have taken credit for humanity; and I remember to have read of one advocate of the holy office claiming merit for quick despatch, and assuring an objector that any criminal who had liberty to chose would prefer to die as he died, by a very hot fire, where the heretic gave one heavy gasp, and all was over. *Wm. Harris Rule,* in *Daniel the Prophet.*

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

In the province of Babylon, on the plain of Dura, probably not far from the city of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar had a magnificent golden image set up and summoned all the officials of his realm to its dedication. A herald proclaimed his decree that when the instruments of music were sounded, every one must fall down and worship the idol; whoever did not would at once be cast into a fiery furnace. Among his officials were the three Hebrew youths who had refused to eat food that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. They had now grown to man's estate, and were under great obligations to the king for their official preferment. When Daniel not only interpreted the king's dream but told him what the dream was, which no one else in the realm could do, the king had made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon, and at Daniel's request, the king had appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. For these men not to bow down to the golden image meant not only a refusal to worship as the king commanded, but a defiance of the king himself; for he and his god were practically one and the same, and the order was a political move to test the allegiance of the officials to their monarch. On the other hand, for them to bow down to the image would be to be untrue to God, to break one of His commandments.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

The story itself is very graphic. Illustrate the courage of the heroes by the stories of Casabianca and of the lads at Paris, p. 359, and teach the lesson of the Golden Text, with its special application to your pupils as indicated at the close of the paragraph about the boldness of the righteous, p. 361.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. In the battle of Aboukir Bay, a French naval officer and his son perished with his ship. Mrs. Hemans has told the story in a poem which I am sure you must know. It begins:

> The boy stood on the burning deck,
> Whence all but him had fled.

Who can tell the story of Casabianca? "Whatever happens I will do as my father bade me," was the boy's determination. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," said Job. Who was it that resolved, "Come what may, we will not bow down and worship idols?" All of these, Casabianca, Job, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, had the courage of their convictions. What does this expression mean? These noble Hebrew youths did not perish by fire as did Casabianca, but they were equally willing to suffer such a death rather than do what their consciences told them would be wrong. Who had given them these strange names? What did they mean? What were their Hebrew names? What did these mean?

For Older Pupils. In Schiller's "William Tell," you remember, Gessler the

Austrian governor, has the ducal hat of Austria suspended on a pole in the market-place at Altorf and issues the command that every one who passes must bow to it. Two men are stationed near by and ordered to put in prison any one who fails to pay the toll of reverence. Tell passes with his little son and does not salute the hat. He is seized by the guard and is being hurried off to prison in the midst of an uproar from the people, when Gessler himself appears upon the scene. The matter is explained and Gessler says to Tell, "Do you so despise your emperor, Tell, and me, who govern here in his stead, that you refuse honor to the hat which I have hung up as a test of obedience?" He dooms Tell to death unless he can shoot an apple from the head of his son at a distance of a hundred paces. Tell does this, and reveals another arrow with which he had intended to shoot Gessler if he had killed his son. He is taken across Lake Lucerne by Gessler to Küssnacht Castle to be eaten alive by reptiles—perhaps you have had the very chapel, now called Tell's Chapel, pointed out to you on Lake Lucerne—but a storm comes up, Tell shoots the governor, makes his escape, and afterwards frees his country.

So vivid is the drama that it is hard to realize that Tell is only a legendary hero in the struggle for independence of the Swiss cantons with Albrecht of Austria, that there was no real Wilhelm Tell.

Of course, as I have been telling the story you have been comparing it with our lesson story. Instead of the market-place at Altorf we have the plain of Dura; instead of the cap on a pole, the image of gold; instead of Gessler and Tell, Nebuchadnezzar and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; instead of Gessler's guards, certain Chaldeans, instead of the ordeal with the arrows, the ordeal of the furnace.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Bowing Down to Idols

We will not serve thy Gods. "Will you, or will you not, fall down and worship my golden image?" says the king. That is the kind of question despotic kings and queens have always been asking of their subjects. And most of the people have always made haste to answer, "Why, yes, your majesty, anything you say." For is not this speaker the king, and has he not the power, if they displease him, to cast them into the burning fiery furnace? Indeed, most of the people fall down and worship the image before he has time to ask them to worship it.

But there may be some who are not quite ready to take their religion at a king's command, or to put their conscience into his keeping. These three men, what sort of reply are they going to make to the king? If, after a pause, they should answer with the rest, "Yes, O king. It must be right since the king commands it and all the people do it; and, anyway, that furnace is too hot to think of; we will conform"—if that is their reply, then instantly these men lose all interest for us. Turn over the page; see if we can find out any other set of men worth reading about.

In Babylon these three men would not say "Yes;" they said "No," and they said it deliberately, thoughtfully, facing all the possibilities of the case. Ah, that is the one thing that makes any city or any land really worth reading about —if it has two or three such men in it. In times of persecution they are what really count; and in other times too; for there are other tests that try men's souls besides the hot fires of persecution. Take it in the common relations of life, as regards such simple matters as honesty, we will say. In what we call the business world, there has been set up an immense golden image, which receives the worship of crowds of people. Literally, they "fall down" and worship it. They fall quickly, and they fall from every standard of uprightness in their reverence for that golden image. It is a pitiful spectacle, humiliating, to see what men will do, and women, for the sake of money—how far they will stoop, how low they will grovel, for the sake of money.

The worshippers of the golden image are going to get the gold occasionally, and the three true men are going to be cast into the burning, fiery furnace; and there is none who will deliver them out of the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Well, thank God, three or four men are going to stand firm on their principles even

then. Even if honesty is not the best policy, they will be honest. Even if God should not deliver them, they will not fall down and worship the golden image. Condensed from *For Whom Christ Died,* by *Dr. Wm. R. Richards.*

Idols of To-day.

Leuthold. To bow to an empty cap, that is, in truth, a silly command!

Freisshardt. Why not to an empty, hollow cap? You bow to many a hollow skull.

Gessler's order in "Wilhelm Tell," to bow to the cap hung on a standard, and Nebuchadnezzar's order in the Book of Daniel, to bow to the golden image seem, in truth, to us silly commands, such as could not be made in our day. But Freisshardt's argument holds good, the principle involved is the same to-day, and the temptation to yield is still the same. Whatever is put in the place of God, whatever is made the object of one's reverence or worship, is a cap or a standard or a golden image, an idol. "Wealth is a golden god, whose shrine is thronged; vanity is popularly adored by hosts in Christendom; pleasure has a whole pantheon to itself."

Heroes of Faith. How often, during the dark hours of the Boxer trouble, did this fact stand out illuminated in the martyrdom of some Chinese Christian! The bowing before an idol, the burning of a stick of incense, the lighting of a candle in the temple would have saved lives, but men died rather than compromise with idolatry. They were bound and cast into their graves. They were buried by inches, but they held fast to their faith. They stood calmly by while their relatives and friends were beheaded and went calmly down to death with a prayer on their lips. Their enemies stood amazed at their steadfastness. When Christians might have escaped they turned back to warn the beloved missionaries. When left alone at their posts the evangelists and preachers went on encouraging and strengthening the trembling church. Enemies loitered in and told them that to-morrow the buildings would be burned and their lives taken. Their characteristic answer would be, "I have lived in the church and it will make a good coffin in which to die." *Elliott I. Coffin,* in *Breaking Down Chinese Walls.*

II But if Not

Kossuth's Reply. When Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, was in exile in Turkey, Austria endeavored to compel Turkey to give him up. The Turks promised him protection if he would embrace Mohammedanism. This was his reply: "My answer does not admit of hesitation. Between death and shame the choice can neither be dubious nor difficult. Though once the governor of a generous people, I leave no inheritance to my people. They shall at least bear an unsullied name. God's will be done! I am prepared to die."

True to their Convictions. Some of us were touched a few years ago by an example of faithfulness to principle on the part of a few college lads in Paris. These American collegians had been invited to go over and compete in the games at the Paris Exposition; but they would not consent to go unless the authorities would agree that the games should not be held on Sunday. At first the college boys all stood together in this demand, with the hope that their united demand would be effectual and they would be delivered from the necessity of stooping to the Continental ways of Sunday-keeping. But just at the end it was found that their demand had not been effectual; their God had not delivered them; the games were coming off on Sunday.

Then some of the boys weakened. But we are proud that a goodly number of the boys did not weaken. It was a hard test for a handful of lads, so far from home, in a land where every one would be disposed to laugh at their scruples; and it meant that they were relinquishing honors almost certainly within their reach, so that their long journey must go for nothing; but they would not surrender their conviction whatever happened, even if their God would not reward their faith by bending the arrangements their way; these boys would not fall down and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. The record they made counts for more than if one of them had outrun a locomotive, or jumped over the Cathedral of Notre Dame. *Wm. R. Richards.*

The Test of Religion. A little band of Stundists (so called because they

kept the *Stunde,* hour of prayer), came a few years ago to the half-arid region in western North Dakota. They were late in planting the first year, and their crops were small. The next year there was a drought. The third year a terrific hail-storm beat down the wheat and cut the corn into ribbons. The fourth year there was another drought.

Through all these tribulations, did they lose their faith in God's care? This was the testimony of one old man at their mid-week meeting: "Shall these things separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? What though for His sake we are killed all the day long? ... In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

During these four hard summers their herds of swine had lived and increased; they were just ready for the market when cholera broke out among them and they began to die. The people did not know what was the matter, and the old man who had paraphrased the words of Paul sent his son to ask an American neighbor to come and look them over. The *Youth's Companion* gives the conversation:

"Look here, boys," said the neighbor. "You hustle down to the railway station, and have the agent wire for a car. We'll sort out those that haven't yet begun to show it, and ship them to Chicago. If you hurry, the agent can get you a car on the local this afternoon, and you can get them off to-night."

"You mean there are some that still are healthy?" asked the old man.

"They're all infected, every one of them. In a week you won't have a hog left on the place. But it takes two or three days after they begin to show the first symptoms before they come down with the disease, and I think if we pick them carefully, we can cut out a carload that will pass."

The boy stood hesitating between the father and the neighbor. In a moment the old man spoke: "Shall we commit this great sin? Not so, for God knows, and He will not see us do wrong, nor yet will He forsake us in our need. No, my friend, if they must die, it is better they die here than in Chicago."

The neighbor returned to his own farm, and told the story to the other neighbors. "Those Stundists have got the real thing," he said.

III The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what Man shall do unto me

The Helper that never fails. The great lesson to be gathered from this deliverance is simply that men who sacrifice themselves for God find in the sacrifice abundant blessing. They may, or may not, be delivered from the external danger. Peter was brought out of prison the night before his intended martyrdom; James, the brother of John, was slain with the sword; but God was equally near to both, and both were equally delivered from "Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." This disposal of the outward event is in His hands, and is a comparatively small matter. But no furnace into which a man goes because he will be true to God, and will not yield up his conscience, is a tenth part so hot as it seems, and it will do no real harm. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Expositions of Scripture.*

The Righteous are Bold as a Lion. A man or a boy whose conscience is on his side does not need to be afraid of anything in the universe. Caleb and Joshua stood firm to their opinion that the tribes were quite able with God's blessing to go up at once and take possession of the Land of Canaan, although the Israelites were threatening to stone them. The stripling David had no fear of the great giant Goliath, and went to meet him with nothing in his hand but a sling. Elijah braved the wrath of the powerful Ahab, and charged him with being the cause of the misery of Israel. The three Hebrew young men were not afraid of Nebuchadnezzar and the burning furnace. Daniel trusted in God when he was cast into the den of lions. Nehemiah, when threatened with an attack by his enemies, and advised to hide himself in the temple, answered: "Should such a man as I flee?" All these good men were "bold as a lion," because the Lord Himself was with them. They feared only the Lord.

It was so also with the followers of Jesus Christ in New Testament times. The Book of Acts tells us of the courage with which the Apostles went about everywhere preaching the Word: men marveled at their "boldness," and "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." The martyrs of the early Church in many lands, and those of the Reformation in England, gloried in their sufferings for Jesus' sake, and rejoiced in the flames of the stake, as if these had been a bed of roses. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells how the saints of old were well spoken of for their faith and courage; but there have been such men also in every later age, and not only grown-up people, but boys and girls, too. The boy who refuses to tell a lie to save himself from punishment is bold as a lion. And so is the little girl who, because of the fear of God, cannot bear the thought of joining her companions in doing what is wrong. *Charles Jerdan,* in *Gospel Milk and Honey.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

A brave man hazards life, but not his conscience. *Schiller.*

What's brave,
What's noble,
Let's do it. *Shakespeare.*

No trials faced in obedience to God will be borne alone. *Maclaren.*

We must obey God rather than man. Acts 5.29.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you. 1 Pet. 4.12.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Lo, I see four men loose. There is always One extra. We sometimes think sadly and doubtfully of the fiery trials which are to try us, but to doubt is disloyalty. Our God whom we *serve* is able to deliver us. *W. L. Watkinson.*

At the burial of John Knox, a speaker said: "Here lies a man who never feared the face of one man." This was true of him because he believed that God was his Helper. The same faith will give the same courage now.

Dr. Donald Sage Mackay defined inclination as desire with grit left out of it, and declared that with some people conviction was only another name for inclination. There is no question about the grit being in the conviction of these three Hebrews. Is it in yours?

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The union of politics and religion. 2. The Book of Daniel. See page 36.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the whole 6th chapter of Daniel. 2. How long since the event recorded in our last lesson? (Clipping, p. 365.) 3. What was Daniel's position in the new kingdom? (Dan. 6.1, 2.) 4. What was the cause of the jealousy of the satraps? (Dan. 6.3.) 5. What is an "interdict"? (Dictionary.) 6. What illustration is given in the Book of Esther of "the law of the Medes and Persians"? (Clipping, p. 364.) 7. A young girl once replied to the question "Why was not Daniel afraid in the lion's den?" by giving an appropriate answer from the fifth chapter of Revelation: what was it? (Rev. 5.5.)

Questions to think about. 1. Should Darius have revoked an unwise law? 2. What king in New Testament times made a vow which he afterwards greatly regretted? (Mt. 14.9.) 3. What good traits can you find in Darius? What evil traits? 4. What lesson did Daniel learn in his youth? 5. Why were Daniel's windows open toward Jerusalem? (Clipping, p. 364.) 6. Would it have been right for Daniel to pray in secret after the decree went forth?

Note-book Work. In your new book "The Jews during and after the Exile" write under "Daniel and his Companions at the Court," Part II: The Idol Worship Test.

LESSON XIII—SEPTEMBER 24

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

Golden Text

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Ps. 34.7.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Dan. 6.1-28. Daniel in the Lion's Den. **T.** Heb. 11.32-40. "Stopped the Mouths of Lions." **W.** Dan. 3.1-30. Quenched the Power of Fire. **T.** Ex. 12.21-35. The Might of Pharaoh Vanquished. **T.** Ex. 14.10-31. "Thus the Lord Saved Israel." **S.** 2 Kings 19.14-37. Saving the Israelites from Sennacherib. **S.** 2 Chron. 20.5-30. "Ye shall not Need to Fight." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Dan. 6 PRINT vv. 10-23 COMMIT vv. 21-23

10 And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. 11 Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. 12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's interdict: Hast thou not signed an interdict, that every man that shall make petition unto any god or man within thirty days, save unto thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, who is of the children of the Captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him. 15 Then these men assembled together unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no interdict nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep fled from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23 Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

10. *The writing was signed.* Vv. 7 and 8.—*His windows were open.* Lattice-work probably covered the windows as they still do in the East, and they

could be opened and shut like doors: compare Judges 5.28; 2 K. 1.2, and 13.17.—*In his chamber.* Probably an upper room.—*Toward Jerusalem.* Compare Solomon's words about captives praying unto God toward their land, 1 K. 8.48; I will worship toward thy holy temple, Psa. 5.7; I will look again toward thy holy temple, Jon. 2.4; and see below. "There seems to be a survival of this in the eastern position in worship deemed important by many Christians" (*Trumbull*).—*Three times a day.* Probably the times mentioned in Psa. 55.17.—*As he did aforetime.* He continued his habit of prayer just as he did before the decree was issued.

11. *These men.* Verses 4-6.

12. *The king.* Darius, verse 9.—*Interdict.* A prohibitory order, a decree that forbids something.—*Hast thou not signed.* Compare their respectful words of address in v. 6, when they wanted the king to make the decree—King Darius, live for ever. Their abrupt address here, without the customary preliminary words (see also Daniel's address, verse 21), shows both their anger and their contempt of the king whom they could use for their own ends.—*Make petition unto any god or man save unto thee.* The crafty counselors had evidently secured from the king this edict because the regulation flattered his vanity, as though he were a god to whom the whole nation must pay divine honors for thirty days.—*The law of the Medes and Persians.* See p. 364.—*Altereth not.* Aramaic, *passeth not away,* RVm. See Esther 8.8.

13. *That Daniel.* The contemptuous words betray their jealousy.

15. *Know, O king.* He might labor to rescue them, but he was powerless before his own law, they remind their tool.

17. *Signet.* See p. 364.—*That nothing might be changed.* Or, *that there might be no change of purpose,* RVm.

18. *Passed the night fasting.* Compare David's fast when his child was sick, 2 Sam. 12.16.—*Instruments of music.* Or, *dancing girls,* RVm.

20. *Is thy God able to deliver thee from the lions?* Is anything too hard for Jehovah, Gen. 18.14.

21. *Hath sent his angel.* Compare Nebuchadnezzar's words in 3.28.—*Innocency was found in me.* Note the confession of his accusers, verse 4.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

16. *Thy God whom thou servest continually.* "Thy God," personal God; as if all thine; for so God treats each man, as if he were an only child, and lavishes His love upon him. "Whom thou servest continually": here is service, obedience, faithfulness, steadfastness, continuity, persistence, perseverance; a service without distraction, flaw, hesitation; a concentrated worship. *Joseph Parker,* in *Pulpit Addresses.*

18. *His sleep fled from him.*

> Heed how thou livest. Do no act by day
> Which from the night shall drive thy peace away. *Whittier.*

22. *My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths.* A little boy, six years old, in the house where I was boarding said to me, "Mr. Mitchell, our Bible down in the parlor on the center table does not tell the truth." "I wouldn't talk that way, Albert," I said; "the Bible always tells the truth." "Yes, but I mean its pictures do not tell the truth." "What is the matter with the pictures?" "Well, there is a picture down there of Daniel in the lions' den, and Daniel stands with a lion on each side of him, and his hand on their heads and their tongues are lolling out." "Well," I said, "what is the matter with that?" He replied, "That ain't so, for the Bible says God sealed the mouths of the lions." *Charles Bayard Mitchell,* in *The Noblest Quest.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

10. *Toward Jerusalem.* Jews in foreign lands turn in prayer toward the land of Jerusalem; and in the land of Jerusalem, toward Jerusalem; and in Jerusalem, toward the temple, says the Talmud. Mohammed first ordered his disciples to face Jerusalem when they prayed, but after his quarrel with the Jews he had them face Mecca. "Praying toward a holy place is a reminder of that which makes that place holy," explains Dr. Trumbull in "Studies in So-

cial Life," "and if a worshipper can be in that place instead of merely praying toward it, he feels that the value of his prayers is manifolded. Thus a Mohammedan feels that a prayer at Mecca counts for seventy thousand prayers away from there."

Dr. Hugh MacMillan, in "Gleanings in Holy Fields," gives an interesting description of a Mohammedan mosque, from which I condense the following: What impresses you most on entering is the feeling of vastness and emptiness which it gives. It is simply a wide space walled around and roofed over by a lofty dome. There is a pulpit in the corner, it is true, but it seems a mere accident in the building rather than the object of it. But after a while you discover that the mosque has a focus of interest and use; and that focus is a kind of alcove or niche in the wall, which is sometimes richly decorated and made conspicuous by its form or material—but most frequently is so simple in its construction and so plain in its adornment, that unless you knew of its significance it might easily escape your notice. This niche is called the Mihrab, and is intended to mark the direction in which Mecca, the sacred city of the followers of the Prophet, lies; and that direction is called the Kiblah. Every worshipper kneels on the carpeted floor, with his face looking to the Mihrab; for in so doing he is sure that he is looking to the quarter where his prayer will be heard, and from which his help will come. The Mihrab is, so to speak, the mariner's compass of the sanctuary, and it varies, of course, in different countries.

The position which Daniel in Babylon assumed, when engaged in the private worship of the God of Israel, had a twofold significance. It was a protest against the prevailing idolatry of the place, and a proof of his ardent love for his native land. Many of his countrymen had yielded to the evil seduction of the luxurious life around them. They married heathen wives, and lost their Jewish pedigree. They forgot their sacred city, and settled down contentedly in the land of their captivity. But Daniel was too noble and patriotic to follow their example. And therefore when performing his daily acts of devotion, he chose a room in his abode whose window looked to the west and not to the east; thus at the same time turning his back upon the worship of the sun, which the people of the land practiced, and his face towards Jerusalem, the center of his faith and the goal of his hopes.

12. *The law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.* The strict etiquette of the Persian court obliged the king never to revoke an order once given, however much he might regret it, because in so doing he would contradict himself, and, according to Persian notions, the law could not contradict itself. A curious instance of the unchangeable character of the Medo-Persian law is seen in the fact that, after Ahasuerus had issued the order directing the cruel slaughter of the Jews (Esther 3.13), he would not reverse it even at the urgent request of Esther, but he issued another edict in which he granted the Jews permission "to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life." Thus the first irreversible edict was completely neutralized by another just as irreversible as itself; and the king continued to act his part as a character but little short of divinity: infallible, immutable, and wholly free from the weakness of repentance! *James Freeman,* in *Bible Manners.*

Letting out a lion. (From the bas-relief of Sardanapalus III)

12. *The den of lions.* The Persians had great enclosed parks which they called "Paradises," where lions, tigers, boars, and other wild animals were kept for the royal chase. Sometimes a lion was brought into the field in a portable cage, and a slave standing on the top raised a gate to liberate it for the hunt.

17. *His own signet.* Every Babylonian of any importance at all carried a seal, generally in the shape of a cylinder, the most ancient form, which was used to stamp their baked-clay documents of all kinds. This almost universal custom was noticed by Herodotus. In cases where a man was too poor to own a seal he made an impression

on the damp clay with his thumb. That seals in various forms were used also by the Persians is proved by the existence of many specimens dating from the Sassanian period. *Driver.*

The signet of Darius Hystaspis represented the king as engaged in a lion hunt. *Rawlinson.*

Royal Lion-hunt

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Our lesson to-day is about a testing to which Daniel was subjected in the capital of the Medo-Persian Empire. Many years have passed since his three friends had their "fiery trial." Nebuchadnezzar and four successors have died, the Babylonian Empire has come to an end, conquered by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus (539 B. C.), and Daniel himself is an old man, placed in the highest position of responsibility and honor. See the Historical Background of Lesson VII, Fourth Quarter.

Clay impression from the Seal of Sennacherib

Dan. 5.31 says that Darius the Mede ruled the kingdom—a statement which has caused much trouble, for Cyrus conquered Babylon, and no ruler by the name of Darius, till the third ruler after Cyrus, is referred to by any other historian nor by any inscription. Perhaps he was a vassal of Cyrus. Contract tables have been found that speak of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, as the "king of Babylon" in the first year of Cyrus, who is called "king of countries": perhaps Darius is another name for this Cambyses, for Cyrus himself, or for one of his vassal kings.

After interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream Daniel was made "to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon." On the death of that monarch he seems to have lost his high position, for Belshazzar, as a reward for interpreting the handwriting on the wall, chapter v, again exalts him, making him "the third ruler in the kingdom." That night Belshazzar was slain, but Darius the Mede made Daniel one of the three presidents who controlled the one hundred and twenty satraps, and found so "excellent a spirit in him" that he purposed placing him over the whole realm. The jealousy of the two other presidents and of all the satraps was aroused, and they plotted together to get rid of him. The sequel our lesson tells.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Miss Jane Addams, in the *American Magazine,* recalls a frequent experience of her childhood. It must have been from a very early period, she says, that she had "horrid nights," when she tossed about in her bed because she had told a lie. Her only method of obtaining relief was to go downstairs to her father's room and make full confession. She was afraid of the dark and would reach her father's bedside perfectly breathless, and having panted out the history of her sin, she always received the comforting assurance that "if he had a little girl who told lies he was very glad that she felt too bad to go to sleep afterwards," and then she would go back to her bed as bold as a lion, there to sleep peacefully.

Little children know what it means not to sleep because their conscience troubles them. In this graphic lesson story (the whole chapter should be told), talk about the reason the king could not sleep and the reason that Daniel could. Teach your pupils Whittier's words, p. 369. Recall Herod's trouble after John the Baptist's death. Show how brave Daniel was in keeping up

his habit of prayer, and tell about Tom Brown's cowardice and then his bravery, below. The thoughts in the first topic can be adapted to your use.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. One thing you were to do this week was to be on the lookout for acts or words of moral courage. Who can tell us one? Who has read about a deed of moral courage? (Tell something that you yourself have observed or read.) Are there as many opportunities for showing true moral courage in daily life now as in the time of Daniel? Do your opportunities seem as great and important as his? What was the first thing that the book of Daniel tells us he did? (Review lesson XI.) How old was Daniel then? To-day we hear of a very courageous deed that he did when an old man. Because he began early to say "no" to temptations it was easy for him to say it throughout his life.

What is said about Daniel in the third verse of our chapter? Once a little girl was reading this verse, and instead of saying "an excellent spirit was in him," she said, "an excellent spine was in him." Her reading was true, for certainly Daniel was a man of firm backbone, as we say; it was no temptation to him to be untrue to his principles. Probably no more temptations came to him than will come to you.

For Older Pupils. When President Taft was Secretary of War he said that the one word which makes character is "No." "The oftener one uses that," he continued, "the safer he is. The word 'no' counts far more in this world, works more wonderful results, than the word 'yes' ever can. It is the man who can rightfully refuse and stick by his refusal, no matter what it costs him, who makes a character that is universally respected. I believe in the frequent and intelligent use of that short word. It is a hard word to become familiar with, but a valuable one."

"The color of our whole lives," said Cowper, "is that which we make it in the first five years we are our own master." These two thoughts may profitably be placed side by side. Their truth is illustrated in the life of Daniel. He became familiar with the word "no" in the first year that he was his own master, and that word made his character. (At the close of the lesson refer again to these thoughts, and give your pupils copies of President Taft's and Cowper's words to take home with them.)

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Three Times a Day

Prayer and Trust. No manner of hurt was found upon him because he had trusted in his God—thus ends our story of Daniel in the lions' den. He trusted in God because it was his custom to kneel upon his knees three times a day and pray and give thanks before his God. The life of trust is dependent upon the life of prayer. A prayerless Christian—if such a Christian is possible—can not be a trustful Christian.

No doubt Daniel's prayer at this time was for help, for he well knew what would be the penalty of his not heeding that decree. But he also "gave thanks before God as he did aforetime." Prayer is not always petition. In a village of German East Africa a young native was made sport of by his companions because they had followed him and had found out that he often went away to pray. It was something they could not understand, something laughable, that one should pray without any special reason for it. They prayed to their gods when there was some pressing need, some danger from which they would be freed, but to pray regularly and often was new to their thoughts. Prayer to a Christian is communion with his Father. What child is there who would talk with his earthly father only when he had some request to make of him? Do you know from your own experience what a life of prayer means? Why do you pray?

Tom Brown's Struggle. In "Tom Brown's School Days," after Tom had been at school a year or more, a new boy entered. After this boy Arthur was ready for bed the first night he looked around the big sleeping-room with its

twelve occupants and then bravely dropped on his knees and prayed before them all. Two or three boys laughed and sneered, and one threw a slipper at the kneeling boy, calling him a sniveling young sham. Tom promptly threw his boot at the young bully; tumult was quieted by the entrance of the verger who put out the lights. Tom could not sleep. He thought of his mother and the promise he had made her that he would never forget at night to kneel by his bedside and pray. Then he thought of how he had broken that promise. The first few nights after coming to the school, he found that the other boys did not pray, and he had waited till the lights were out and then he stole out of bed to say his prayers when no one could see him. Then he began to think that he might as well say his prayers in bed, and then that it didn't matter whether he was kneeling or sitting or lying down. And next it came to pass that for the last year he had not prayed at all.

Poor fourteen-year-old Tom! "The first and bitterest feeling was the sense of his own cowardice. He had lied to his mother, to his conscience, to his God. And then the poor little weak boy had done what he, braggart as he was, dared not do. He resolved to write home and tell his mother what a coward her son had been. And then peace came to him as he resolved to bear his testimony next morning. The morning would be harder than the night to begin with, but he felt that he could not afford to let one chance slip. Several times he faltered, for the devil showed him, first, all his old friends calling him "saint" and "Square-toes," and a dozen other hard names: and then came the more subtle temptation, "Have I any right to begin it now? Ought I not rather to pray in my own study, letting other boys know that I do so, and trying to lead them to it, while in public, at least, I should go on as I have done?" But he resolved to follow the right impulse.

Next morning in the face of the whole room he knelt down to pray, and rose from his knees comforted and ready to face the whole world. It was not needed: two other boys besides Arthur had already followed his example, and he went down to the great school with a glimmering of another lesson in his heart—the lesson that he who has conquered his own coward spirit has conquered the whole outward world; and that other one which the prophet learned in the cave at Mount Horeb, when he hid his face and the still small voice asked, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" that however we may fancy ourselves alone on the side of good, the king and Lord of men is nowhere without His witnesses; for in every society, however seemingly corrupt and godless, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

The Morning Uplook. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up. When I am down in the country, I come down stairs and go out on the big breezy piazza, and the very first thing I do is to look up. I take a look at the sky; I see which way the wind is blowing; I find out what kind of day it is going to be. Ah! how much in your life and mine depends on that wondrous habit of looking up in the morning, of starting from our rest as if, almost, we were rising up to begin a new fresh life, and before we have been compelled to fix our eyes on things around us (to look at our books, or at our practising or at our home duties) to look up and greet with conscious thoughts that blessed One who has gone up on high to pray for us and to prepare a place for us. What a beginning to a day that makes; how much it has to do with the way the wind shall blow all that day, and what sort of day it shall be. *C. C. Hall,* in *The Silver Cup.*

II Which Way are you Facing,

Toward Sodom or Toward Jerusalem? Back in the early days of the history of the Hebrew people we read that Lot pitched his tents toward Sodom, and that was the beginning of his downfall. He faced the wrong way. The windows of Daniel's chamber were open toward Jerusalem: he faced the right way. The trend of Lot's life after he pitched his tent toward Sodom was along the line of the wickedness of Sodom. The trend of Daniel's life was toward Jerusalem and God. Lot began by walking in the counsels of the wicked; soon he was standing in the way of sinners, and not long afterwards he was sitting in the seat of scoffers: this is the way sin always progresses.

The deflection from the strict path of duty may be very slight, merely a supposedly momentary facing toward the wrong, but the trend in one direction once established, the path leads far away from the direct line of duty.

The Inner Motion that decides the Trend. In my college days I was the pitcher on the university ball nine. I suppose every young man understands the art of curved pitching. Suppose I take a ball in my hand. I can throw this ball perfectly straight for twenty or thirty feet, but at the end of my throw it will swerve from its course to the right; or, again, I can throw this ball, so far as you can see, precisely the same way, and again it will go perfectly straight for thirty feet, and then at the end of the throw swerve to the left. Now, the secret of this all is in the spiral motion given to the ball as it leaves the pitcher's hand; but this spiral motion given to it by the pitcher you are unable to see, and two balls which seem to you to start in the same way, and to be following exactly the same direction, in the end may swerve in exactly opposite directions. Now, it is just so oftentimes with the moral man and with the Christian. They may seem to be going in exactly the same direction. As far as you can see there is no difference between them. The one is as good and pure and noble as the other; but the truth is that one has that inner heart spiral motion which at the end is going to swerve him away from God, and the other that inner heart motion that shall bear him at last to the very bosom of God. The vital thing about these lives of ours is not entirely the outward walk. Nay! but rather the inner motion of the heart. The trouble with your moral men lies not so much in the outward life as in the heart. The inner motion there is wrong, and it always will be wrong until Jesus comes therein to change it. *Merle Smith,* in *Giving a Man Another Chance.*

III Missionary Topic—How God Delivers

The Question. The Book of Daniel has been called an epic of martyrdom, a splendid illustration and confirmation of the Beatitude, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It is easy to see in these stories that it is blessed to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, to see the truth of our Golden Text, that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them; for Daniel's three friends are delivered unsinged from the fiery furnace, and Daniel spends a night in the lions' den and is released unscathed.

But it is not always thus. Daniel is thrown to the lions and is unhurt, but Ignatius of Antioch is flung to the wild beasts and is devoured. Multitudes of early Christians were eaten by wild beasts or crucified, innumerable martyrs were tortured and burned at the stake in the middle ages, many a missionary has been murdered in recent times. Were they blessed? Did the angel of the Lord deliver them?

The Answer. A greater deliverance may come through death than would come by escape from death. James and Peter were both sentenced to death by Herod; James was beheaded, while Peter was miraculously released. Which one escaped the greater suffering? In the Boxer rebellion in China in 1900, when the missionaries were shut up in Peking, prayer was made earnestly for them by the church the world round. One hundred and twenty-seven missionaries were murdered, while hundreds—yes, thousands—of others were rescued. Why some, like James, were put to death, and others, like Peter, were delivered, we know not. God guides the requests of His church, and answers them according to His wisdom. We must trust Him who sees the end from the beginning.

Peter's great deliverance has been paralleled many times in missionary history—not perhaps by supernatural messengers, but as certainly by men and forces directed by God. A missionary to Burma tells of a Christian who was tied to a cross on which it was decreed that he should be crucified on the morrow. Prayer was made for him by the native church. While his captors feasted to celebrate their success, the prisoner worked at his thongs until he set free first one hand, then the other, and finally his feet. In the shadows he slipped past one armed guard after another until he escaped and entered the church where they were praying for his release.

God is not limited in His methods; He may save by natural or by supernatural means; he may release by death or from death. Looked at from the viewpoint of eternity, a few years more or less count little, except as they enable us to do the will of God. *Delavan L. Pierson,* in *Sunday-School Times.*

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies. *Whittier.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

He who purposes in his heart not to defile himself may reasonably expect deliverance from the lions' den. *H. Butterworth.*

"No!" he said, and none then knew
The sacrifice it meant,
Nor how a soul to greatness grew
Through this relinquishment. *Harold S. Symmes.*

I cannot afford to give up the sure ground of a principle. *Plato.*

The day that prayer dies in a man's soul he commits spiritual suicide. *Donald Sage Mackay.*

Prayer has an "hour," it has a place, in our life: it is no more to be crowded out than the most vital practise of receiving one's daily food. *Charles Cuthbert Hall.*

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Mt. 6.13.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Lord, let me make this rule—
To think of life as school,
And try my best
To stand each test. *M. D. Babcock.*

What impression are we making upon observers—Dariuses, who are looking at us? Do they expect us to be delivered, honored, crowned, because servants of God? What impression are we making as to our Christian faith? Let us take the question to heart and wrestle with it when we have most power in prayer. *Joseph Parker.*

Dare to do what is right. God is always with the moral hero.

If we are ever in doubt what to do, it is a good rule, says Lord Avebury, to ask ourselves what we shall wish on the morrow that we had done.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Sleep and worry. 2. Is it possible to be a secret Christian?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What is known about the prophet Ezekiel? (1.3; 3.15; 29.17; 40.1.) 2. When and why did he go to Babylon? (Clipping, p. 372.) 3. Explain the references in verses 12 and 13. (Read the first three chapters of Ezekiel.) 4. Where was Tel-abib and the river Chebar? (Dictionaries. Clipping, p. 372.) 5. What was the condition of the first exiles from Judah? (Clipping, p. 372.) 6. Read Jeremiah's characterization of the first group of exiles in Jer. 24. 7. Read Jer. 29, his pastoral letter to them.

Questions to think about. 1. What was the purpose of Ezekiel's vision? (Clipping, p. 374.) 2. What reasons can you give for the prophet's bitterness, v. 14? 3. What was the purpose of his going to Tel-abib? (Clipping, p 375.) 4. Have you any duties of a Christian Watchman? 5. Make an effort this week to seize an opportunity to put yourself in another person's place and view things from another's standpoint. Note what difference this makes in your judgment of that one.

Note-Book Work. In your Book write Part III, The Prayer Test.

FOURTH QUARTER

LESSON I—OCTOBER 1

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL A WATCHMAN

Golden Text

Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. Ezek. 3.17.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Ezek. 3.1-27. The Prophet Ezekiel a Watchman. **T.** Ezek. 2.1-10. Speaking to a Rebellious House. **W.** Ezek. 33.1-33. The Watchman's Duty and Responsibility. **T.** Ezek. 18.19-32. The LORD ready to Forgive. **F.** Isaiah 21.1-12. The Watchman Set by the LORD. **S.** Acts 20.17-35. Example of Fidelity as a Watchman. **S.** 1 Cor. 9.16-27. Becoming All Things to All Men. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Ezek. 3 PRINT vv. 12-21 COMMIT vv. 17-19

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, *saying,* Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place. 13 And I *heard* the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing. 14 So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me. 15 Then I came to them of the Captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 20 Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

12. *Then.* The prophet's commission is given him after his vision of the four cherubim, four wheels, and the divine glory, and his first commission, chapters 1-3.—*The Spirit lifted me up.* "Ezekiel was not miraculously transported to Tel-abib, but in his movement thither he was under the influence of God's Spirit, like Elijah in 1 K. 18.46" (*Dummelow*).—*I heard behind me.* As he went on to Tel-abib he seemed to leave behind him the objects seen in his vision, chapter 1.

13. *The noise of the wings.* Ezek. 1.24.—*The noise of the wheels.* Ezek. 1.19.—*Beside.* Or, *over against,* RVm.

14. *I went in bitterness.* Some scholars interpret the bitter feeling as just anger showed with God against the Israelites because of their hardness of heart, verses 4-11; others, as psychological reaction that follows exaltation of spirit.—*The hand of Jehovah was strong upon me.* The prophet felt impelled by God to go.

15. *Them of the Captivity.* Of the first captivity under Jehioachim.—*Dwelt.* Or, *sat,* RVm.—*Overwhelmed.* The situation was very grave.—*Seven days.* Compare Job 2.13., 16-21. Compare Ezek. 33.1-20.

17. *Son of man.* This term, which occurs nearly one hundred times in the book of Ezekiel, is equivalent to "member of the human race, mortal."—*A watchman.* To watch was one of the chief duties of a prophet; Ezekiel's call to be a prophet is told in chap. ii.

18. *When I say.* "The watchman spies danger approaching, so the prophet receives intimation from the Lord" (*Davidson*).—*Thou shalt surely die.* "To die was to be cut off from the restored kingdom of God, foretold in the latter part of this book" (*Dummelow*).—*His blood will I require.* You shall be responsible. Compare Acts 18.6.

19. *Thou has delivered thy soul.* See Ezek. 14.14; 1 Tim. 4.16.

20. *I lay a stumbling-block.* Something that caused him to stumble and fall. "This difficult phrase does not mean that God seeks to make the righteous fall, but that the temptations of the righteous are under God's providential control. Where there is a temptation He also sends a warning, and the two constitute a discipline by which the righteous man is tested, and under which he has an opportunity of moral growth. The case of a righteous man sinning and perishing in spite of warning is not contemplated at all" (*Dummelow*).

21. *He shall surely live.* "Only when the righteous is seen maintaining his righteousness unto the end can the watchman feel that he has delivered his own soul in regard to him. Like a ship laden with a precious freight, he has to be anxiously piloted into the haven" (*Davidson*).

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

15. *I came to them of the Captivity by the river Chebar.*

A sad and thoughtful youth, I went
With Israel's early banishment;
And where the sullen Chebar crept,
The ritual of my fathers kept.
The water for the trench I drew,
The firstling of the flock I slew,
And, standing at the altar's side,
I shared the Levite's lingering pride,
That still, amidst her mocking foes,
The smoke of Zion's offering rose.

In sudden whirlwind, cloud and flame
The Spirit of the Highest came!
Before mine eyes a vision passed,
A glory terrible and vast;
With dreadful eyes of living things,
And sounding sweep of angel wings,
With circling light and sapphire throne
The flame like form of One thereon,
And voice of that dread Likeness sent
Down from the crystal firmament!

The burden of a prophet's power
Fell on me in that fearful hour;
From off unutterable woes
The curtain of the future rose;
I saw far down the coming time
The fiery chastisement of crime;

With noise of mingling hosts, and ajar
Of falling towers and shouts of war,
I saw the nations rise and fall,
Like fire-gleams on my tent's white wall. *Whittier.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Again we turn backward to a time before the final destruction of Jerusalem. About two-thirds of all the Jewish exiles in Babylon were in the first deportation with Jehoiachin, 597 B. C. They were the leading Jews, princes and officers, soldiers and artisans: Ezekiel (17.3-6, 12-14) calls them the best of the nation. They fared better in Babylon than did the second group of exiles after the fall of Jerusalem eleven years later. During the first ten years of the exile, at least, the Jews kept in close touch with their kinsmen in Judah. The prophet Jeremiah advised them in a letter to build houses and dwell in them, to plant gardens and eat the fruit, to rear up families, to avoid insurrection, to find their prosperity in the city to which they had been carried. Though they were homesick for their land and city and temple, their material prosperity in Babylon seems to have been far greater than at home. Professor Kent says, in his history of the Babylonian Period: "The peculiar genius for trade, which the Jews have manifested ever since, was probably first developed amidst the favoring conditions which surrounded them in the land of the two rivers. In contract tablets recently found at Nippur, and dating from the earlier part of the Persian period, many familiar Old Testament names occur, showing that by that time the Jews had been drawn into the streams of trade which flowed so strongly to and from Babylon."

Among this first company of exiles was the young priest Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, who five years later, 592, received his call to the prophet's office. In the first three chapters of Ezekiel we have his account of the call, the vision, and commission. See p. 34 of Introduction.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The scene of the lesson is at Tel-abib by the river Chebar. The name Tel-abib probably means "Hill of the Deluge," a name given in Babylonia to the many "mounds formed by the disastrous flood that had swept over the face of the land before the establishment of a system of irrigation." The exact location of Tel-abib is unknown, but it was in the fertile land between the Euphrates and Tigris, not far to the east of Babylon and closely connected with it by canals. In two tablets recently excavated at Nippur (south of Babylon) dated in the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 B. C.) there is a reference to the large navigable canal Chebar.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

If you have a class of girls, begin with the story about Genevieve, p. 375; if your class is composed of boys, tell them the story on the same page of the boy who wanted his father arrested. Get your pupils to tell you of finding out afterwards that some one was not as mean as they supposed, and lead them to admit that they might have known at the time if they had tried to see things from that some one's point of view. Let the Second Topic, or put yourself in his place, be your theme. Many illustrations will occur to you connected with your pupils' lives and interests that will put a new thought into some of your pupils' minds, and will be helpful to all of them. Refer to the lesson text only after you have taught your lesson. Then give the general setting—the exiles by a river not far from Babylon, among them the prophet Ezekiel, thinking about two great things—what he must do for God, because God had called him to be His messenger to these exiles, and what he can do to help these people to whom God has sent him. He is with the exiles because he must be one with them, must put himself in their place and see what their troubles and temptations are, so as to understand them and help them. Close with a talk about the divine example, the Son of God living as a man among men, sharing their troubles and hardships, putting Himself in their place and thus becoming the great Helper of all.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Jake Leach was a wonderfully shrewd lawyer in Charlotteville, Tennessee. Several years ago he was informed that he was expected to defend a young man who was charged with murder. No one saw him exert himself to get the facts, and it was thought that he was making no effort for his client, who was poor. Strickland Gillilan tells the result. When the time came for him to speak at the trial the lawyer arose with eyes half closed, as if his thoughts were far away and said:

"Yo Honah an' gentlemen of the jury, I well remember the fu'st time I eveh saw the man now befo' you as the defendant. I was walkin' along the street an' I heard fiddlin'. I follows the sound to the do' of the sto' and I stahted in. Jest as I put my foot ovah the do' sill, a voice called:

"'Ain't that yo', Jake Leach?'"

"I looked an' saw the man was blin' an' I said, 'Yes, it's Jake Leach; but how did you know me, an' you stone blin'?'

"An' he says, 'Jake', he says, 'I slep' in the leaves with you' in the Confed'ate ahmy, an' I nevah forgot yo' step. As my eyesight has gone, my eahs is a heap quickeh than they used to be, an' I've neveh fo-got yo' step.'

"Boys, gentlemen of the jury, that was ol' Bill, the fatheh of this boy heah that we're goin' to hang because he's accused o' murder. Me an Bill set there an' talked, an' he fiddled an' this little boy set beside his pappy an' looked up at him proud, an' his pappy looked to'ads him proud too. His pappy loved this boy. We set and talked oveh the ol' wah days an' nights—yo' know. Some o' the men on this jury has slep' in the leaves with Bill, same as me. You all know he was as squah a comrade an' as brave a man as eveh wo' the gray or any othah coloh, an' as good a shot as eveh toted a caybyne. But Bill's in heaven now, boys, if squah comrades go thah. He's gone away from that little boy that loved his pappy, an' he's a-lookin' down with 'is new eyesight on us ol' comrades that's slep' in the leaves an' shared everything with im—lookin' down on us a-gettin' ready fo' to hang that little boy of' his'n. Yes, comrades, we're goin' to hang Bill's boy. He's been arrested an' he's accused of killin' somebody. We're a-goin' to hang him while old' Comrade Bill looks down on us an' sees what we ah doin'—

"No!" suddenly shouted Jake, his eyes blazing and his clenched fist uplifted, while hope lit up his face. "No! We ah not a-going to hang Bill's boy! I cain't believe they's twelve men anywheah, specially if any of 'em evah slep' in the leaves with Bill, that will find it in theah heahts to hang Bill's boy while his ol' pappy that was all wrop up in 'im looks down an' sees us. We cain't! Why, look—" And then Jake began a review of the evidence.

The review of the evidence was not necessary, however. Already the jurymen were half-standing in their places, tears running down their cheeks and murmured protests on their lips against hanging Bill's boy. And the jury acquitted him unanimously without—dare we believe?—giving due consideration even to the strong probability of innocence that the evidence actually brought out.

Can you not see how skilfully the lawyer aroused the sympathy of the jury? He and many of them "had slept in the leaves" with their old comrade, and after that their comrade's troubles were theirs. So the prophet Ezekiel sat where the exiles in Babylonia sat, and made himself one with them in sympathy.

For Older Pupils. The book of Ezekiel is to most people perhaps one of the least familiar books of the Bible. The meaning of much of the book is hidden under symbolism, but that of our selection to-day is plain. Who was Ezekiel? When did he live? What have you learned about the Book as a whole? (See sketch in the Introduction, p. 34.)

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Inspiration for Service

The Glory of Jehovah, the Living Creatures, and the Wheels. When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living

Assyrian winged figure

creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. And I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them.

However we may interpret such strange words as those in which the prophet strove to describe a majestic spiritual truth, one thing is quite clear. We, God's wheels, turning, ever turning, as we strive to accomplish His purposes, are not machines merely; the spirit that must be humanly tender and brave and strong and swift lives within each one of us, dominating, driving, directing.

But that is not all of the vision. The wheels forget—poor, weary wheels! and the spirits forget—brave worn spirits! that Ezekiel saw farther, saw higher, than we. Hear him strive to express the great truth burned into his mind: "Over the head of the living creature...was... the terrible crystal...and above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness of a man...as the appearance of fire...as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain...This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah."

There is nothing trivial, nothing to be evaded or hurried over, to be impatiently derided or set aside. All has become orderly; everything has its purpose and its place. The wheels are held in their turning by the rule of the living spirit, and over each living spirit stands that spirit's Lord and Master, bringing the throne and the fire, the power and the glory of Almighty God, to shield and encompass the spirits that should know neither weariness nor despair as they grasp heaven and earth, and hold the sordid commonness and unvarying drudgery and monotony of life true to God. Editorial, *S. S. Times.*

The Purpose of the Vision. The vision of God's glory and power inspired Ezekiel for His service among His people—that was the purpose of the vision. To be God's co-worker was the sacred duty laid upon him. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; he became God's faithful messenger and his people's faithful watchman. As the Rev. John Skinner says: "The call of a prophet and the vision of God which sometimes accompanied it are the two sides of one complex experience. The man who has truly seen God necessarily has a message to men. Not only are his spiritual conceptions quickened and all the powers of his being stirred to the highest activity, but there is laid on his conscience the burden of a sacred duty and a lifelong vocation to the service of God and man. Of the two elements the call is the one that is indispensable to the idea of a prophet. We can conceive a prophet without an ecstatic vision, but not without a consciousness of being chosen by God for a special work or a sense of moral responsibility for the faithful declaration of his truth."

The Comfort of the Vision. Ezekiel's task was difficult. The people whom he was to convince were like adamant, and whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, he knew not. But the vision was his comfort.

"Out! out to brave the odds!
'Tis well. Up with the sail! The wind is God's."

Ezekiel knew that he was not voyaging alone—God controlled the wind.

II The Inspiration for Sympathy

Sitting where Others sit. In solitude the prophet had seen the vision and listened to the call, but to carry out his commission successfully he had to leave his solitude and mingle with the throng of exiles, identify himself with them, look at life through their eyes, see things from their standpoint. He came to them of the Captivity where they dwelt, and sat where they sat. Thus he gained that sympathy with them in their homesickness and hardships which was essential for one who would help them.

"In the Divine Incarnation, Christ came and sat where we sat," Mr. William Mathews points out in the *Christian World Pulpit.* "We often ask the question, Why did Christ come into the world and take the form of man? Because men were His children, because He loved them, and because the way to take hold of them was to bring Himself down into their condition that He might sit among them as their brother in adversity and need; that they should be able to know Him, hear Him, see Him, and feel Him, and thus, by the power of divine sympathy and redeeming love, He might have easy and direct access to every human soul. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God."

How a Girl learned to put Herself in the Place of Another. Genevieve was on her knees before the fire-place poking furiously at a smoldering log, when the door opened behind her. Without turning her head she sputtered: "The more I think of it, the meaner Ethel seems. Wait till its her turn to entertain the club next month! I'll invite all the nicest girls to the matinee, and how'll she like that?" With a final angry thrust at the log, she stood up, and found herself facing her mother's guest, Miss Moore.

"O Miss Moore!" she exclaimed, in embarrassment, "I never dreamed that was you."

"Then I'm not to answer the question?" Miss Moore asked, with a twinkle.

Genevieve hesitated. She was not ashamed of her temper, but she was ashamed of having shown it before Miss Moore. "I'm going to tell you the whole thing," she said impulsively. "You know our club meets once a month, and we girls take turns entertaining. Next week is my turn, and here Ethel tells me she can't come because she has invited company for that day. And her 'company' is made up of the nicest girls in our club. There will be just a few stupid ones to come here. Now do you blame me for wanting to pay her back?"

"I'm not sure. We should have to prove it," Miss Moore said, thoughtfully.

"Prove it?"

"Yes; like arithmetic—to see whether the answer is right. You know, to prove an example in subtraction you add, after subtracting, and in division you multiply, after dividing. Proving is turning your work round and doing it the opposite way. I never feel quite safe about my conduct until I've proved it."

"But how would you prove this?"

"Easily. You must turn the whole thing round. You mustn't cheat or leave out any figures. You must be Ethel, and honestly look at it from her side. Ethel, why did you choose that particular afternoon for your company?"

"Oh! W-well," Genevieve admitted, after an instant's blank pause, "it will be my brother's birthday."

"It will? How many brothers have you?"

"Only one."

"I see. But why did you have to ask the club girls, and spoil Genevieve's afternoon?"

This was hard for Genevieve—but she was honest. "They're favorites of his," she said, very slowly. "They can sing and play. He—he's a cripple and can't go out."

"Oh!" said Miss Moore. "I wonder why you didn't invite Genevieve?"

"I did," Genevieve answered, flushing scarlet. "I wanted her to postpone the club but— She flashed out at me like a little spitfire, and said I'd planned to spoil her meeting, and—"

"That's enough, you honest child!" Miss Moore broke in. "But what was the matter with that example? How did you work it out first?"

"Please, never mind, Miss Moore," Genevieve said, quickly. "It doesn't prove at all. I—I worked it in too great a hurry. I'll do it over, and get the right answer now, though—and I'll prove it, too." *The Youth's Companion.*

How a Boy learned to put Himself in the Place of Another. A boy entered the Juvenile Court in Chicago and said he wanted his father arrested, as Mr. Thurston of the court has told the story. When asked why, he replied: "To make him stop hitting me." "But why does he hit you?" "He says if I take off these pants he'll hit me." "But why do you want to take off the pants?"

I asked. "Aren't they all right?" "No, they're too short and the boys at school and on the street laugh at me—and I don't want to wear 'em."

I looked at him. His mother had indeed made a mistake in the adjustment of a pair of man's trousers to a boy and had cut them off so short that his socks showed over the tops of his shoes. No wonder he wanted to take them off. I said, "All right, Mr. H. will be here in a few minutes."

The next day I asked the officer what he did about the trousers. He said at first nothing would do but to arrest the father, but, as he talked over with the boy the number of children, how much a new pair of trousers meant to them, how hard his father and mother worked, the possibility of soon getting work himself—and the bravery that many a poor boy has shown in laughing down and outliving the jeers and thoughtless playmates, he changed his mind and said, "All right, I'll wear 'em. It'll be worse for mother and all the children if I have him arrested. I guess he ain't so mean as I thought he was."

III Moral Responsibility for Others

The Watchman. Professor Toy calls this chapter "The earliest known formulation of moral responsibility of man for man." Am I my brother's keeper? is a question asked in the childhood of the race; it is a question which we in this day are taking more and more seriously. But after our year's study of the history of the Jews, their oft repeated warnings and as oft repeated hardenings of heart, it would be as unjust to hold any prophet responsible for their course as it was the grandfather in a story told in the New York *Tribune*. Grandmother had gone downstairs for a few minutes, leaving Katharine sailing some tin ducks with a magnet in a bowl of water. When her grandfather looked up from his book she had succeeded in drenching herself from head to foot. "Why, why!" he exclaimed in dismay, "what will grandma say now?" "Oh!" said the little girl, instantly, "she will scold you for letting me do it!"

Ezekiel was not held responsible for results; he was responsible for effort. He was appointed as a watchman to warn the house of Israel, and if any one missed the way of life through his failure to point it out, then he would have been accountable. Ezekiel did not fail to see the sword coming and blew the trumpet and warned the people, 33.32.

Dr. Hale's Responsibility. A number of years ago a young thief was caught in the act of committing burglary in the home of Edward Everett Hale in Roxbury. Many believed that Dr. Hale, so well known for his love of mankind, would not appear against him. But on the contrary, Dr. Hale took an active part in having the burglar committed to the reformatory. He believed that the law ought to take its course; and he tesified against the prisoner himself, so that the thief was sent to the reformatory for three years.

But though Dr. Hale upheld the law, he did not any the less fail to care for the youthful criminal. Busy as he was, he took time every week, during the three years, to write personally to the thief, trying to wake up his self-respect and stimulate his courage. When the time was up he had secured a good position for the former law-breaker. The young burglar, who had come to regard him as his truest friend, went into the new position, proved himself worthy of it, and became a useful, honest, self-respecting man. A weak mercy might have let him slip back into crime. A loving justice saved him.

It would have been far easier for Dr. Hale to have let him go at first. It would have saved the trouble of thinking about him and planning for him during three years. It would also have seemed more kind to many unthinking people. There is a great deal of so-called "kindness" in the world to-day along just such labor-saving lines. To love our fellow-man actively and wisely is a great deal of trouble. To love them passively and weakly is no trouble at all in comparison. But it is the sort of love that is the fulfilling of the law that pays—pays just because it costs. *Wellspring.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Only as we know man can we serve him. *G. Campbell Morgan.*

There is a wide difference between putting yourself in another's place and putting him in your place. *William George Jordan.*

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EZEKIEL

Never judge any one less advantaged than yourself till you have sat down and tried to put yourself in his place. *Gypsy Smith.*

God is the Governor-general, and I am only the agent by whom He designs to work His will. *General Gordon, Sudan,* 1877.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

A preliminary glimpse of God is essential for successful work among one's fellow-men.

Even in their exile, deserved though it was, God did not leave His children alone. His presence was with them, Ezekiel was His chosen messenger to them. God never leaves any one without proof of His presence and care.

"'O Lord, touch that man with Thy finger, touch him with Thy finger, Lord!' The petition was repeated with great earnestness, when something said to him: 'Thou art the finger of God! Hast thou ever touched this thy neighbor? Hast thou never spoken a single word to him on the question of salvation? Go thou and touch that man, and thy prayer shall be answered.'"

There never comes a day that does not bring to us an opportunity and an obligation to leave our point of view and put ourselves in another's place—for our own betterment as well as that other's help.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

Our responsibilities and accountabilities.

> How long will they permit this graft and stealing?
> Why don't they see that courts are clean and true?
> Why will they wink at crooked public dealing?
> (Did you ever stop to think that "they" means you?) *Life.*

How far are we accountable for the error of those who are under our influence? Is the Editor of the *Sunday-School Times* correct, when he says: "We are responsible for the failures of those whom we train or direct. Many a man indignantly denies it, or tries to squirm out of it; but the fact remains. The parent with a child, the teacher with a pupil, the employer with an employee, the department head with a subordinate or helper—all of these are responsible, and are properly held responsible, for the failures and errors of those under them. Business could not be conducted on any other basis. Nor can life. We ought to have as high standards for ourselves in home and school as the commercial world has for itself."

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What is the last prophecy recorded in Ezekiel before his series of visions connected with Jerusalem and the temple? (39.25-29.) 2. Where was Ezekiel when he had his vision? (Ezek. 1.1-3.) 3. Read about the beginning of the vision, Ezek. 40.1-5. 4. How is the prophet's guide described in 40.3-4? 5. How did Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Joel represent divine blessing as water? (See Concordance: Isaiah 12.3; 30.25; 55.1; Jer. 2.13; Joel 3.18.) 6. What does the prophet Zechariah say about living waters? (13.1; 14.8.) 7. What does Jesus say about the water of life? (Jn. 4.5-15; 7.37, 38.) 8. What was John's vision of the River of Life? (Rev. 22.1-5.) 9. How much is a cubit? (Dictionary.)

Questions to think about. 1. In what circumstances was this vision penned? 2. What "house" is referred to in v. 1? 3. What is the significance of the stream's flowing from the threshold of the sanctuary? 4. Why was the figure of a life-giving stream especially pleasing to the people of Judah? (Clipping, p. .) 5. Describe the course of the river. 6. Describe the Dead Sea. 7. Why is the Dead Sea salt? 8. What sea is meant by the Great Sea, v. 10?

Note-Book Work. In your book of "The Jews during the Exile," leave space for Part IV in your record of Daniel, and head your next chapter "The Prophet Ezekiel." Write Part I, The Prophet as a Watchman.

LESSON II—OCTOBER 8

THE LIFE-GIVING STREAM

Golden Text

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22.17.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Ezek. 47.1-12. The Life-Giving Stream. **T.** Joel 3.14-21. A Fountain Shall Come from the LORD's House. **W.** Zech. 13.1-6. A Fountain Opened for Sin and Uncleanliness. **T.** Jer. 2.14-19. Forsaking the Fountain of Living Waters. **F.** John 4.1-26. The Well of Living Water. **S.** Ps. 46.1-11. A River Making Glad the City of God. **S.** Rev. 22.1-5. The River of the Water of Life. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Ezek. 47.1-12 COMMIT v. 9

1 And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east): and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by the way of *the gate* northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of *the gate* that looketh toward the east; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through *the waters*, waters that were to the loins. 5 Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this?* Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river. 7 Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and they shall go toward the sea, into the sea *shall the waters go* which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed. 9 And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters are come thither, and *the waters of the sea* shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh. 10 And it shall come to pass, that fishers shall stand by it: from Engedi even unto En-eglaim shall be a place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be after their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11 But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt. 12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing.

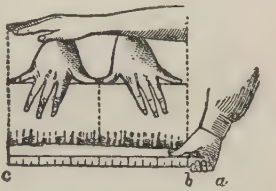
WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *He.* See Ezek. 40.2-4.—*He brought me back.* Back from the outer court of the temple, 46.21. See the Historical Background.—*The house.* The temple. —*Waters issued.* "This representation is possibly based on an actual spring or

other water source on the temple hill, but it is probably the creation of the prophet's imagination. The temple area was in later times supplied with water by an aqueduct" (*Toy*). See Psa. 46.4.—*From under the threshold of the house.* Where the priest and the people worshipped, 46.2-3.—*Right side.* South side.—"This passage (1-12) is the basis of Rev. 22.1, 2. For a similar, yet different picture of physical change in the future age see Zech. 14.8" (*Dummelow*). —*The altar.* Which was before the house in the inner court, 40.47.

2. *By the way of the gate northward.* They went out through the northern gate and then around to the eastern because the east gate of the inner court was opened only on the Sabbath day and then only for the prince, 46.1-8, while the east gate of the outer court was always closed, 44.1-2.—*The gate that looketh toward the east.* This eastern gate is the one at which all the observations begin: 40.6; 42.15; 43.1; 44.1; 46.1.—*Ran out.* Or, *trickled forth,* RVm.— *On the right side.* Toward the south.

3. *Cubits.* A cubit varies from eighteen to twenty-one inches.



Cubit-Rule, According to Paine

5. *Afterwards he measured a thousand.* He was now four thousand cubits or a little over a mile from the temple.

7. *Upon the bank were many trees.* He notices this on his return; the barren banks have been transformed by the fruitful stream.

8. *The eastern country.* The Wilderness of Judea, between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.—*Arabah.* The deep depression of the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, at the Dead Sea a quarter of a mile below sea level.—*The sea.* The Dead Sea.—*The waters shall be healed.* The sea has no outlet, its water escapes only by evaporation, and is therefore very salt.

9. *Rivers.* Heb. *two rivers,* RVm.—*Shall live..* The Dead Sea being so salt is wholly destitute of life.—*And...healed.* Or, *that all things may be healed and live,* RVm.

10. *Engedi...Eneglaim.* See Georgraphical Background.—*The great sea.* The Mediterranean.

11. *Given up.* Or, *given for,* RVm.—*Salt.* The marshes around the sea are reserved as a source of supply for salt.

12. *Upon the bank thereof shall grow every tree.* "So there is nothing—nothing too sunken, too useless, too doomed—but by the grace of God it may be redeemed, lifted and made rich with life" (*George Adam Smith*).—*New fruit.* Heb. *first-fruits,* RVm.—*The leaf thereof for healing.* See Rev. 22.2.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *The waters issued out.* The healing waters of God's temple are not limited to the inside; they come through the door to the outer world. In one sense Messiah's Kingdom is confined to a comparatively small number; so far as its actual membership is concerned it is limited in its range. But its influence has gone far beyond its membership; the waters have issued from under the threshold of the door. *George Matheson,* in *Rests by the River.*

12. *Because the waters issue out of the sanctuary.* This beautiful representation of the healing stream, issuing from the temple and fertilizing the desert as well as changing the bitter waters of the Dead Sea into sweet, so that they yield abundant sustenance to men, rests on some natural and some spiritual conceptions common in Ezekiel's days. One natural fact was this that there was a fountain connected with the temple-hill, the waters of which fell into the valley east of the city and made their way towards the sea; and long ere this time the gentle waters of this brook, which flowed fast by the oracles of God, had furnished symbols to the prophets (Is. 8.6). Such waters in the east are the source of every blessing to men.

The religious conceptions are such as these: that Jesus Himself is the giver of all blessings to men, and from His presence all blessings flow. He was now present in His fulness and forever in His temple. Hence the prophet sees the

life-giving stream issue from the sanctuary. Another current idea was that in the regeneration of men, when the tabernacle of God was with them, external nature would also be transfigured. Then every good would be enjoyed and there would be no more evil nor curse. The desert would blossom like the rose, and the field that aforetime was thought fruitful should be accounted no better than bush. The barren land toward the east and the bitter waters of the sea were a contradiction to the ideal of an external nature subservient in all her parts to man in the fellowship of God. Therefore the desert shall be fertilized and the waters of the sea healed, and all things minister to men's good. But "good" to the Israelite was not exclusively spiritual; it was also material. It would be an error to regard this fertilizing, healing stream in the light of a mere symbol for blessings which we call "spiritual." It is well fitted in other connections to be such a symbol; but to take it so here would be to overstep the limits of the Old Testament and anticipate a later revelation. As yet the Israelite had no conception of a transcendent sphere of existence for men in the fellowship of God, such as we name heaven. Man's final abode even in his perfect state was considered to be still on the earth. God came down and dwelt with men; men were not translated to abide with God. But God's presence with men on earth gave to earth the attributes of heaven. Yet man's needs remained, and God's presence was the source of all things necessary to supply them. When he had the needful blessings the Israelite saw in them the tokens and the sacraments of God's favor and presence with him; and conversely when God was near he was assured that he should want no good thing. Ps. 34.9. *A. B. Davidson,* in *The Cambridge Bible.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

1. *Behold, waters.* Ezekiel's figure of the Life-giving Stream meant more to the people who had lived in Jerusalem than we easily realize. Judah abounds in deserts, the sun shines upon it with tropical fervor, the breezes that come from the east are like blasts from a furnace, the city is perched on a barren rock, and water to its inhabitants has always been a luxury. How often the people whom Ezekiel addressed must have wished that a living stream poured down the dry bed of the intermittent Kidron!

In his book on Jerusalem, Dr. George Adam Smith says of the city's water supply: What thrift and storage of scanty supplies! The dykes of Holland, piled to keep the water out, tell no more eloquent tale of the labor of centuries, the piety and resolution of many generations, than does the story of what Jerusalem has done to keep the waters in—the rock cisterns of her early days; the desperate care to bring the springs within the walls out of reach of besiegers; the execution of tunnels and pools by men hardly apprenticed to the art of engineering; the struggle to keep pace with the rise of the city's level above the sunken sources of the past; and, finally, the long aqueducts and deep reservoirs of more numerous and civilized generations.

When all these labors, before the last-Herod's aqueduct, resulted in such moderate achievements, when the reservoirs and springs were liable to be exhausted by the failure of the rains, and the parched gardens scarcely relieved the barrenness of the landscape, do we wonder, that as the mirage of the desert appears to the parched traveler like pools and lakes, so the hopes of this thirsty people assumed the form of streams and rivers about their Holy City? It is only a study of the conditions that can furnish us with full sympathy for the words of the prophet Ezekiel about the Life-giving Stream.

11. *They shall be given up to salt.* The Dead Sea salt is much mixed with earth, and it is probable that, as at the present day, purer qualities were imported to Jerusalem from more distant sources. When in Moab, I found that the salt used by the villagers was not all brought from the Dead Sea coasts, near as they lie, but mainly from the salt-pans of the Wady Sirhan in Arabia. *George Adam Smith* in *Jerusalem.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is now 572 B. C., the twenty-fifth year since Ezekiel was taken to Babylon with the first group of exiles from Judah, and fourteen years after the fall of

Jerusalem and the second captivity. The last eight chapters of the Book of Ezekiel record the addresses of the prophet by which he kept before the thoughts of the people their beloved land and city and aroused in them a hope of return. In vision he is transported to Palestine; he describes the perfect temple of the New Jerusalem, God's return to it, and the people's perfect service therein. The effect of this perfect service will be that God's blessing shall flow forth as a magic river, so that the whole land will be transformed into beauty and fruitfulness. This result he tells in the beautiful symbolic vision which we call "The Vision of the Waters."

"The whole passage (the last eight chapters) exhibit the prophetic imagination in one of its most daring and splendid flights," Prof. John E. McFadyen well says. "Ezekiel and his people are still in the land of exile—they are doomed to remain there for at least thirty years, and, so far as human eye could see, forever. But, so sure is the prophet that Jehovah will bring His people back to their own land, that he actually draws up a minute and elaborate program for the reorganization of the Church on their return. Even in the Bible, with its hope invincible flashing from every page, there is nothing more sublime than this—that, by the waters of Babylon, where the natural hopes seemed forever extinguished and there was nothing left for the exiles but to hang up their harps upon the willow trees and weep as they thought of their beloved Jerusalem, which they were never likely to see again—there is nothing more sublime than this, that a prophet could not only see beyond the immediate sorrow, in some vague way, to a brighter day, but that he saw it all so clearly and confidently that he prepares and minutely plans for it."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The course of the symbolical river at its source as far as the torrent-bed of the river Kidron is indicated under "Words and Phrases Explained." The Kidron begins north of Jerusalem, comes around between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives, and then plunges down the alkali waste of barren precipices of the wilderness of Judea. "So barren and blistered, so furnace-like does it become as it drops below the level of the sea, that it takes the name of Wady-enhar, or the Fire Wady. At last its dreary course brings it to the precipices above the Dead Sea, into which it shoots its scanty winter waters; but all summer it is dry."

The Dead Sea, then called the Salt Sea, lies thirteen hundred feet below the sea level, its shores wholly barren of vegetation, with here and there deposits of sulphur, bitumen, and tall figures of salt. Near the centre of the western shore is Engedi. The name, which means Fountain of the Kid, was given to it because "several hundred feet up the mountain, the little silver thread of a spring bounds and skips, kid-like, from rock to rock." The site of En-eglaim is unknown, but is supposed to have been toward the mouth of the Jordan.

As we part with Ezekiel in this lesson, let us turn from his Wonderful River to the Hindich Canal a few hours southeast of Babylon, where there is a little Jewish village known as Kifil, the Arabic corruption of the name Ezekiel, and there visit the tomb which tradition says is that of the prophet. See the picture, page 35. To this spot annually have come for centuries the descendants of the Exiles of Jerusalem who still dwell in the land of their captivity. The tomb as described by Dr. Edgar James Banks in Traces of the Hebrew Exiles (*Sunday School Times*) is a large, square, brick structure, enclosing an open court, and surmounted by a pinnacle-shaped dome, similar to other tombs of Arab construction. Within, beneath the dome, is the grave, in a large chamber whose walls are richly decorated with bright-colored Hebrew inscriptions. The building itself, constantly renewed by the devout worshippers, appears to have come from the prosperous days of the Arabs, but it probably originated with the death of Ezekiel, for of all the tombs of the prophets none seems more authentic. Here, probably, Ezekiel lived; here the exiled Jews gathered to listen to his teachings and to hear the visions which all of the Christian world are still reading; here they received encouragement from his

prophecies of a return from exile. Our illustration is from a recent photograph.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Ask your pupils how many of them have ever been in the country, if there was a brook where they went, what was growing along the banks of the brook; were the banks greener than the fields; why; if they have heard at school about the wonderful Nile river; why it is wonderful; what it does for Egypt. Describe how scarce the precious water was in Jerusalem, p. 380. The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw the land wholly changed by a wonderful river. Sketch on the blackboard the course of the Kidron, and as you talk about the picture that Ezekiel saw follow the course of the river and describe the changes that it wrought.

Then draw the lesson of the beautiful parable; what water is to our bodies and all growing things, that God's Spirit is to our soul and its growth. You can adapt for your class the first two selections under the Second Topic and the first under the Third.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Last year a beautiful statue was erected by one of the churches of Boston. It is the last work of one of America's greatest sculptors, Mr. Saint-Gaudens, and represents one of America's greatest preachers, Bishop Phillips Brooks. The figure is of heroic size, and behind and above it stands the figure of Christ, with His hand resting on the preacher's shoulder. Do you not see what it means? By these figures in marble the sculptor shows that Bishop Phillips Brooks' power came from Christ; Christ inspired him, we say. So by figures in words the prophet Ezekiel represents the thought of the divine source of all power and blessing, and his figure in words of The Wonderful River is a most beautiful one.

For Older Pupils. How does the twenty-third Psalm begin? What are the next two verses? He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters; he restoreth my soul. What does this beautiful imagery mean? Some scholars believe that the Psalm expresses the thanksgiving of the Israelites for their liberty after the captivity in Babylon; they are once more in Judea, a flock well cared for by their Shepherd. The pastures are green because they lie beside the still waters; everything lives where these waters flow. While they were yet in captivity, with no prospect of ever being allowed to return to their beloved land, the prophet Ezekiel told them of his vision, which under the same beautiful figure of a life-giving stream assured them that they were not without the Great Shepherd's care, that they should be brought back to their old pastures, where the wonderful stream from the throne of God should restore their souls.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I. The Life-Giving Stream

The Rivers of Ezekiel and of John. In the first instance this mystic river of Ezekiel's was a symbol of the miraculous transformation which the pious Jew expected the Land of Canaan to undergo in order to fit it for Jehovah's ransomed people. The prophets cherished the expectation that one day, when Israel was wholly obedient, God would renew the face of nature, and all Palestine would blossom like the rose.

This mystic stream, however, demands a larger interpretation. The thought of Israel anticipated the time when the Messiah would send forth a tide of living influence through the nations, cleansing their corruptions, and making everything in human life and society to realize its ideal. The seer of Patmos gives the final significance of Ezekiel's vision: And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the stream of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Under the vivifying influence of the Gospel of Christ the most

hopeless lands and classes revive, and the blasted regions of wickedness become as the Garden of the Lord. The influences which alone can purify the world are spiritual and flow from God in Christ.

A modern traveler through the wild wastes of country beyond Tripoli reports that in the deserts he came upon extensive patches of brilliantly colored flowers; although growing in the dried-up torrent-beds of a land from which the scorching sky had licked up every atom of moisture, the flowers were apparently in vivid and mysterious bloom. Upon nearer approach the traveler found the unique phenomena explained. The flowers had actually mummified in the drought and heat, and with their natural tints preserved were permanent as though cut in paper. Thus the literature of classic lands surprises us with patches of brilliantly colored moral teaching in apparently living bloom; but close examination shows its artificiality—it was little more than speculative, academic, traditional; and although it exhibited the natural expression and tints of the virtues, it had, like the petrified flowers of the desert, no vitality. What a mighty change followed the coming of our Lord! Everything shall live whither the river cometh. Revealing the holy God, the eternal universe, the spirituality of the human nature, and pouring forth on humanity the Holy Spirit, our Lord put a soul into morality: He gave it a sound root, planted it in a vital soil, and henceforth the righteousness of a man was superseded by the righteousness of God. Condensed from a chapter in *The Supreme Conquest,* by *Dr. W. L. Watkinson.*

The River is for the Healing of the Nations. Sooner or later the world comes back from false religions to one which *works.* Human nature loves to experiment, and every new fashion, even in religions, gets tried. But the deep heart of man in the time of stress and strain, when the rivers are tested, wants a religion that works. A thousand forms of religion have died out of memory and are as weak to-day as the beams of Noah's Ark. But the great life-currents of Christ's religion flow on for the healing both of men and of nations. It still works. It works wherever it is fairly tried. Darwin was amazed when he saw what Christianity was doing for the Tahiti savages. He wrote: "The lesson of the missionaries is the enchanter's wand; the march of improvement consequent on the introduction of Christianity in the South Seas probably stands by itself in the records of history." No; it does not stand alone. The similar record comes from all peoples where the same gospel is tried. It made over the bloody German warriors into Christian men, and it has the same power to-day, whether it is tried in Palestine, in New York slums, or in the home of the city millionaire. Wherever it gets a chance, it works. The truth is as new to-day and as old as the Apostle James' that a faith that does not work is dead. There is little hope for a religion of which it cannot be said, it worketh. *Rufus M. Jones,* in *Practical Christianity.*

The Bible a Reservoir of the River of Life. I think the Bible is not so much a river as a reservoir, out of which streams are perpetually flowing in all kinds of different directions.

There was once a town lying at the foot of a mountain and getting all its water supply from a great reservoir at the mountain-top. The water was conveyed down by a channel or pipe. All at once the supply failed; they waited, but still no water came. At last, because no place can exist without water, the town began to be deserted—until was seen scrawled, on one of the buildings, "If you want to know why the water has failed, dig below." So they dug, and they found that, out of sight, just under the surface of the ground, something had clogged the pipe. There was the beautiful sparkling water up above, and there was the thirsty town below, but there was something in the way—the water could not get through.

The Bible is a great reservoir, full of the Water of Life, and conveying it in beautiful, helpful streams to you and me. But sometimes we find the Bible does not help us. Why? It is not the fault of the Bible; it is the fault of ourselves. Something has got in the way. Sometimes it is a bit of laziness; we got up too late to find time to read our Bibles. Sometimes it is a bit of carelessness. Very often it is a bit of irreverence that has got in the way, and we have not read our Bibles in the right spirit. *The Bishop of Kensington,* in *an Address.*

The Message of Love.

The Word of God is a message of Truth;
O River from out the Throne,
Where'er thou comest, to age or to youth,
There Life is, and Life alone;
How tender the power o'er the broken heart;
How healing the penitent tears that start,
Assuaging the pain of many a smart,
And bringing the dew of peace.
O come, and listen, ye rich and poor,
The Word is treasure that shall endure;
To the East and the West, to the South and the North.
The Message of Love Divine bear forth! *J. Stuart Bogg.*

II Take the Water of Life Freely

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness: for they shall be filled. Nansen and his men suffered from thirst many weeks while crossing Greenland. So intense was the cold that they could melt only ice enough for a little tea for each man. Every moment of their waking hours they craved water. At last they saw water in the far distance. Like madmen they rushed to the spot where the sun had melted a little pool, and throwing themselves down on the ice they drank till they could drink no more. They who thirst after righteousness as these men thirsted after water, shall be filled.

You recall the conversation of Jesus and the Samaritan woman near Jacob's well. "Give me to drink," said Jesus to her. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman," she questioned in wonder.

Then Jesus said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." "Sir," returned the woman, "thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?" And Jesus answered: "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life."

And again on that last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

The Water that satisfies. Dr. W. L. Watkinson says that recently in Manchester he saw a sea gull trying to amuse itself with a pie dish. There was a little water in the pie dish, and the bird of the ocean was doing its best to make the most of its struggling instinct. What a sight to see this bird, with its instinct for the unmeasured ocean, trying to satisfy itself with a pie dish! But is not that a picture of human nature trying to make itself contented in the conditions of this secular life? the Doctor asks. You smile at the bird of the sea in that miserable limitation, but is it not infinitely pathetic to see human nature trying to make itself content with perishing things?

The Divine Life in Man. What mysterious glory in the thought that God will give Himself to man, will enter man's life, and fill all its channels with power and grace, even after sin and self-neglect and the wasting of opportunity have drained life of so much of its own power. Yet God would be to each of us as the ocean to the river. He would fill us with Himself. It is only the bar we throw across the mouths of our life, closing the channel against Him, prevents the fulness of His life from entering into us. It is His will to dwell in us. "Ye are," says His Word, "the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them."

What mysterious glory in the thought that this purpose of God to dwell in us is revealed in Christ; that Christ, whom we can understand, whom we call our Brother, whom we can love as our Friend, is this great ocean-fulness of God that enters our life. "In him," says Paul, in words never to be forgotten, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made

full." Wilt thou, then, unbar thy life, my friend, and let Him in—the Christ for the inmost life—the ocean for the river-bed? *C. C. Hall,* in *The Christ-Filled Life.*

III Give the Water of Life Freely

Freely ye have received, freely give. The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, said Jesus to the woman at Jacob's well. There are different kinds of wells: Dwight L. Moody tells which kind Jesus meant His followers to be. "When I was a boy upon a farm in New England, I used to pump the water from our well upon washday, and for the cattle; and many a time I had to pump, and pump, until my arm got tired. But they have a better way now. They don't dig down a few feet and brick up the hole and put the pump in, but they go down through the clay and the sand and the rock, on down until they strike what they call a lower stream, and then it becomes an artesian well, which needs no labor, as the water rises spontaneously from the depths beneath. I think God wants each of His children to be a sort of artesian well; not to keep pumping, but to flow right out."

Recent investigations of Geological Survey officers show that the crust of our globe contains an enormous quantity of underground water. Below a depth of six miles, it is believed, no water can exist in the rocks, because the tremendous pressure probably closes all pores; but above that level the quantity of underground water is estimated to equal one-third of all the water contained in the oceans. If poured over the land surface of the globe, the underground water would be sufficient, they estimate, to cover it to a uniform depth of from three thousand to three thousand five hundred feet. The supply of water in God's universe is inexhaustible; if one only dips deep enough one can cause artesian wells to rise from the depths to refresh the parched earth everywhere.

The supply of the water of life is inexhaustible, and it is to be had for the asking. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink, said Jesus; and then He pointed out that the draught would not only allay one's own thirst but would allay the thirst of others; for, He added, he that believeth on Me, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. The water that Jesus gives His disciples not only shall become in them wells of water, but that water shall flow forth for others.

When caravans are in want of water in the desert (Spurgeon recalls the fact), they send on a camel with its rider some distance in advance, and after a time, a second camel rider. As soon as the first finds water, almost before he stoops down to drink, he calls aloud "Come!" The next one hears the voice and repeats the word "Come!" The nearest one takes up the cry, until the whole desert echoes with the word "Come!" As eager should they be who have found the source of the water of life to send the good word on to other thirsty ones.

The Influence of the Aloe. Sometimes the bread-fruit tree on which the natives of the South Sea Islands depend, loses its leaves, its fruit fails to form, and it seems fit only to be hewn down and cast into the fire. But the natives never destroy the tree till they have tried a strange experiment. Close beside its roots they plant an aloe; as the aloe grows its thick, juicy leaves gather moisture even from dry air and yet drier soil, which it supplies to the roots of the bread-fruit tree. Soon the tree begins to revive under the influence of the aloe, and it puts forth leaves and bears much fruit. Sometimes a human being begins to show signs of dry rot: the fruit that proves the reality of his spiritual life is lacking. Perhaps all that he needs is the influence close beside him of some Christ-filled, life-giving friend.

How Power to give the Water of Life may be lost. In the Cathedral at Genoa there is an emerald vase at least eight hundred years old, but tradition says it was given by the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. According to this tradition, Solomon filled the vase with a precious elixir he had distilled, which had the power of maintaining life. The vase remained unopened year after year, for Solomon would not prolong a useless life with the elixir, and he always had some excuse or he forgot to keep his promise when it was sought by worthy persons. At last he became dangerously ill himself and

had the vase brought that he might drink and save his own life. His servants opened it, but it was empty. The last drop of the precious elixir had evaporated.

The world is perishing for want of the water of life. How one young girl lost her power to quench the thirst of others is thus told in the *Youth's Companion*:

She had been in the habit of reading a chapter in her Bible night and morning, but there was so little time now that by degrees the chapter dwindled to a verse, and was finally forgotten altogether. She had been used to stop in her work several times a day; to be silent for a moment while she lifted her soul to Heaven and strengthened it with a thought of Christ's nearness to her and His infinite love. But she gave up now these hurried draughts of the water of life, and her thirsty soul grew weaker and more silent within her. The world outside was noisy enough in its demands. It seemed to her that her duties were never performed, work hard as she would. The life died out of her efforts, too, though she could not have told the reason why it was so.

In the garden outside her window, there stood a tall young sapling, which for several years had thrown out its strong green branches and yielded both shade and fruit. Sarah observed one day that it was beginning to wither. The leaves faded and dropped off; then the branches shriveled and grew brittle In a month or two the bark upon the tree began to shrink and crack.

"The tree is dead," said her father. "It will be of no more use."

"I could train vines upon it," she suggested.

"No. The taproot has been cut. It is dead." He looked at her gravely a moment, and then continued: "When a human being, like a tree, ceases to draw life unto himself, he can be of no support to others. He may make a fair show and still stand erect among men. But he is dead; he is of no use in the world."

Sarah went silently to her own chamber, and kneeling, cried to God. "Is it too late?" she asked. "Is it too late?"

SENTENCE SERMONS

The Bible tells us of the streams that it may allure us to the fountain. *Erskine.*

The fountain of life is hid with Christ. *Matthew Henry.*

The human spirit without the indwelling Christ is but a river-bed without water. *C. C. Hall.*

The river flows; but it is the man who rests on the Word of God who shall find it flowing for him. *Robert Rainy.*

The spring wells up in thee;
Unless thou stop its source
'Twill flow eternally. *Angelus Silesius.*

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. Ps. 42.2.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Isa. 55.1.

If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Jn. 7.37.

I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. Jn. 10.10.

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. Isa. 12.3.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

The most barren life can be redeemed by the River of God.

The germinating power of the River of God is seen in every mission-field. What are you doing to help carry it there?

You can not let the water of life into your life if you can not let it flow out into others' lives. Of every Christian in his lesser measure others should be able to say is true what Prof. A. B. Bruce, of Scotland, said of Phillips Brooks in his greater measure: This man is just like a great water main attached to an everlasting reservoir of God's truth and grace and love, and streams of life, by a heavenly gravitation, pour through him to refresh my weary soul.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The Source of the River, 1, 2. II. The Growth of the River, 3-5. III. The Effect of the River, 6-12.

The prophet Ezekiel is describing his Great Vision. He has finished his view of the temple, its courts and its worship as they are to be in the New Jerusalem, and now his angelic guide brings him once again to the door of the temple. There he beholds a miracle. From underneath the threshold waters issue; they flow past the great brazen altars in the inner court and then out through the eastern gate. In order to follow its course, for the eastern gate is closed, his guide leads him out of the temple courts by the northern gate and then around to the outer eastern gate. At the south side of this gate he finds the flood of water pouring forth. He enters the river with his guide, who measures with a line the distance they traverse. A quarter of a mile away the water is up to their ankles; a half mile is measured, and the water reaches their knees; three-fourths of a mile more, and it is up to their waists; a mile, and the ever-increasing river has become too deep for them to walk in, deep enough to swim in. "Hast thou seen this marvel, O son of men?" the guide questions, then brings him to the river's bank. Now he finds trees growing along both sides. The river shall flow down the wilderness of Judah even unto the Dead Sea, says the guide, and what is more marvelous still, everything shall live wherever the river comes: it shall purify even the Dead Sea so that it will support life, it shall swarm with fishes so that from En-gedi to En-eglaim fishermen shall spread their nets and catch them. The marshes around the Dead Sea, however, shall not be sweetened, for they shall still supply the needed salt. Every tree that produces food shall thrive on the river banks; its leaves shall not wither, nor its fruits fail; it shall renew itself every month, because the waters, which are its life, come from the sanctuary; its fruit shall furnish food, and its leaves have a healing virtue.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Book of Ezekiel. See pages 34-36 of this book.

2. The river starts from the sanctuary: from each church influences should stream that quicken and bless the life of all around. The river sought the most direct course to the desert and the Dead Sea: the Church should carry the water of life to the waste places, the dreary, barren, thirsty places of the world. Is the life of our church limited to its own outer and inner courts?

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What was the date of the destruction of Jerusalem? 2. Of the return from exile? 3. Who ruled in Babylon between Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus? (Clipping, p. 391.) 4. What can you learn about Cyrus? (Encyclopædias.) 5. What had Jeremiah said about the return? (Jer. 29.10.) 6. What prophet had mentioned Cyrus in connection with the return? (Isa. 44.28.) 7. What became of the descendants of the exiles who remained in Babylonia? (Clipping, p. 389.)

Questions to think about. 1. Why did Cyrus permit the exiles to return? (Clipping, p. 393.) 2. What reasons can you give why the Jews should return to Jerusalem? 3. What reasons can you give for their remaining in the land of their exile? (Clipping, p. 389.) 4. What is meant by "the house of the Lord"? 5. What had become of the temple that Solomon built? 6. Explain the figure in verse 6. 7. How does God "stir up the spirit" of men? 8. Read the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, remembering that it represents the people in exile, burdened with a sense of alienation from God, and then their yoke was lifted and their captivity broken: Dr. Jowett calls this chapter "Homeward Bound!"

Note-Book Work. In your book write Part II of your account of the Prophet Ezekiel: The Prophet's Vision of Healing Waters from the Temple.

Write a dialogue between two Jews of Babylon in which they discuss the proclamation of Cyrus, the counsels of the prophets, and the arguments in favor of returning and of staying.

LESSON III—OCTOBER 15

THE RETURN FROM THE CAPTIVITY

Golden Text

He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. Micah 7.18.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** 1.1-11; 2.64-70. The Return from the Captivity. **T.** Isaiah 45.1-13. The LORD's Word to Cyrus. **W.** Isaiah 44.21-28. Cyrus as the LORD's Shepherd. **T.** 2 Chron. 36.22,23. The Word of the LORD by Cyrus. **F.** Jer. 25.1-14. The Word of the LORD by Jeremiah. **S.** Jer. 29.1-14. The Word of the LORD again by Jeremiah. **S.** Ezek. 37.1-28. Ezekiel's Prophecy of the Resurrection of Israel. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Ezra 1.1-11; 2.64-70 PRINT Ezra 1.1-11 COMMIT 1.3,4

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me: and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the god of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' *houses* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. 7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; 8 even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 And this is the number of them; thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10 thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the Captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1-3a. These words are like 2 Ch. 36.22, 23. See the Introduction, p. 24.—*In the first year of Cyrus.* The first year that he captured Babylon and ruled over the Babylonian Empire, 538 B. C.—*King of Persia.* Cyrus was of Persian descent and Persia was the most important of his conquests: originally king only of Elam, he conquered Media, Persia, Lydia, and then Babylon.—*The word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished.* See Jer. 29.10; 25.11-13. Jeremiah prophesied that the captivity would last seventy years; Ezekiel (4.6) that it would last forty. From the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. to the return in 538 was about fifty years, but exactly seventy years intervened between the destruction and restoration of the temple, 586 to 516

B. C.—*Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.* "Josephus states that the divine will respecting the Jews was made known to Cyrus by the prophecies of Isaiah. (See Isa. 44.28; 45.1-4, where Isaiah is styled 'the Lord's servant,' and 'the Lord's anointed'). Be this as it may, God's purposes were fulfilled, whatever may have been the motives by which the Persian king was consciously actuated." (*Dummelow*).—*Made a proclamation.* By a herald.—*Put it also in writing.* His written proclamation sent to officials throughout his empire.

2. *All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me.* It was the policy of Cyrus to be known as favored by the gods of every people.—*He hath charged me.* See Isa. 44.28; 45.1,12,13.—*To build.* By allowing the Jews themselves to build, verse 3.—*A house.* The temple.

3. *Among you.* Among all the people of his kingdom.—(*He is God*), *which is in Jerusalem.* Or, *He is the God who is in Jerusalem,* RVm.

4. *Whosoever is left in any place where he sojourneth.* Ryle gives this paraphrase: In any place where survivors of the Jewish captivity are to be found sojourning.—*The men of his place.* The native Babylonians, as well as Jews.—*The freewill-offering.* The voluntary gift.

5. *The heads of fathers' houses.* Hereditary rulers of the tribes. See Josh. 7.16-18.—*Of Judah and Benjamin.* There were also some from Ephraim and Manasseh, 1 Ch. 9.3.—*Whose spirit God had stirred.* The majority of the Jews preferred to remain in the land of their exile.

6. *Strengthened their hands.* "The idea is that of 'grasping', 'laying hold on the hand with the view of strengthening or supporting'. The Jews who sought to return were like a convalescent essaying to walk and needing assistance."

7. *Which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem.* See 2 Ch. 36.7.—*And had put in the house of his gods.* An inscription has been found in which he declares that the aim of his conquests was to glorify his gods and to secure the means to rebuild and adorn their temples.

8. *Mithredath.* "The Hebrew form of the old Persian name Mithradates."—*Numbered them unto.* Counted them out to.—*Sheshbazzar.* Probably this was the name by which this man was known at court, and Zerubbabel, 2.2, was his name among his own people. The foundation of the temple is ascribed to both, 5.16; 3.8. "Some regard Sheshbazzar as identical with Shenazzar the uncle of Zerubbabel (2 Ch. 3.18,19), or take him to be a Persian commissioner accompanying Zerubbabel (for although he is here called the prince of Judah, *i. e.,* the representative of Judah's royal line, the Septuagint styles him 'the guardian over the treasure,' or 'treasury')."

10. *Bowls.* "Vessels provided with covers or lids" (*Ryle*).

11. *All the vessels...five thousand and four hundred.* Those mentioned in the preceding verses total 2499. Whether some vessels were omitted from the itemized list, or whether some of the figures have been wrongly copied, does not matter.

64. *The whole assembly together was forty and two thousand three hundred and three score.* "It is probable that this means only the heads of families; if so, the whole body of those who left Babylon, including women and children, was about two hundred thousand" (*Sayce*).

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

5. *Even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.* The return to Palestine meant a hard journey; it meant that they must abandon their newly-acquired homes and the rich, well-watered gardens, for the hills and an uncertain existence in Jerusalem. The city and the temple were the only attractions of their abandoned country, and while the most devout, guided by the religious leaders, returned, the greater part remained.

The Jews increased in numbers and flourished. They established schools; they studied and revised their laws; they collected their traditions with greater zeal than ever before, and added new books to their literature. Occasionally, with the wealth which they accumulated, they performed the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and while on the way bewailed their exile, more as a matter of

custom than of heart. The great leaders—Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel—preached the return; still the Jew clung to his exile and to Babylonia.

During the first century of our era, two Jewish brothers,—Asinai and Anilai,—the leaders of a large Jewish community at Neherda, north of Babylon, became powerful, and with a bravery displayed in Palestine a few centuries earlier by the Maccabees, established an independent Jewish state. There the chief of the captives, the Resh Galutha, the position first occupied by Ezekiel, resided, and thither the Jews, still mourning the exile from which they would not return, flocked for consolation and advice.

The descendants of the exiles still inhabit every part of Babylonia. Of the one hundred thousand population of Bagdad, forty thousand are Jews. In the town of Hillah, upon the site of Babylon, there are probably as many Jews as Arabs. In the sacred cities of Meshed, places almost inaccessible to the non-Moslem, are now a few Jewish families. In the malarial marshes of lower Mesopotamia, far from other habitation, I have found Jewish families living alone, cultivating their rice-fields precisely as in the days of the exile. Beyond the Euphrates, in the great Arabian desert, where even the Turk fears to go, I met a Jew serving as the agent of Saadun, the great shaykh of the rebelling Montific Arabs.

In general, the modern Bagdad Jew, ground down by oppression, is an ignorant, loathsome creature. While forgetting much of the good of his own religion and traditions, he has adopted much of the superstition of the Arabs. *Edgar James Banks,* in *Traces of the Hebrew Exiles in Babylonia, Sunday School Times.*

9. *And this is the number of them.* But is not this dry enumeration a strange item to come in the forefront of the narrative of such an event? We might have expected some kind of production of the enthusiasm of the returning exiles, some account of how they were sent on their journey, something which we should have felt worthier of the occasion than a list of bowls and nine and twenty knives. But it is of a piece with the whole of the first part of this Book of Ezra, which is mostly taken up with a similar catalogue of the members of the expedition. The list here indicates the pride and joy with which the long hidden and often desecrated vessels were received. We can see the priests and Levites gazing at them as they were brought forth, their hearts, and perhaps their eyes, filling with sacred memories. The Lord had 'turned again the captivity of Zion' and these sacred vessels lay there, glittering before them, to assure them that they were not as 'them that dream.' Small things become great when they are the witnesses of a great thing.

It is almost within the lifetime of living men that all Scotland was thrilled with emotion by the discovery, in a neglected chamber, of a chest in which lay, forgotten, the crown and sceptre of the Stuarts. A like wave of feeling passed over the exiles as they had given back to their custody these Temple vessels. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Ezra.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

2. *He hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem.* As recent discovery of papyri on the island of Elephantine opposite the town of Assuan in Egypt proves at the time of the events of this lesson there was a Jewish colony settled there whose temple was destroyed by the Egyptians. A letter of 408 B. C. beginning: "To our master Bagoas, governor of the Jews. Thy servants Jedoniah and associates, priests in the city of Elephantine"—asks help in these words: "If our master thinketh well to build this temple seeing they permit us not to build it, lo, unto thy friends and clients which are here in Egypt let a letter be sent from thee concerning the temple of the God Jahu (Jehovah) in the city of Elephantine to build it even as it was before." Another papyrus contains the answer of Bagoas: "Thou shalt say in Egypt before Arsames (the governor) concerning the altar-house of the God of Heaven, which was built before our time, before Cambyses, in Elephantine, which Vidrang...destroyed in the fourteenth year of King Darius, that it is to be rebuilt in its place as it was before, and that meat-offerings and frankincense shall be offered upon this altar, as was done formerly."

37. *Let him go up to Jerusalem. Also Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah.* In the inscription of the Broken Cylinder of Cyrus, the great Conqueror of Babylon and Liberator of the Jews evidently speaks for himself. Cyrus ascribes the ruin of Nabonidus to the anger of Merodach, "Lord of the gods," which was excited by innovations and omissions in the sphere of religion. The opening lines, after relating Nabonidus' elevation to the throne, appear to have described the various measures of the new king, which were hostile to the local temples of Babylonia and their time-honored rights. Nabonidus appears to have aimed at enforcing the universal worship of Merodach, the tutelar god of Babylon, by the suppression of the old local worships. It is evident that the king attempted to centralize the national religion in his capital by withholding the wonted supplies from the great local sanctuaries, and by removing of gods to Babylon; and instituting the worship of Merodach throughout the country. Merodach himself resented the invasion of his own domain by the intruding gods, and chose Cyrus as his minister of reparation, to restore the gods of Babylonia to their proper abodes, and the gods and peoples of other lands and cities, who had been expatriated by the Babylonian sovereigns, "to their own dwelling-places." We thus see that the permission given to the Jews to return to their own country, and the surrender to them, of the sacred vessels of their temple (in default of any image of their God) was no act of isolated clemency, but a part of the general policy of the Persian conqueror towards the foreign populations who had been deported to Babylonia by Nabopolassar and his successors. *C. J. Ball,* in *Light from the East.*

69. *Darics of Gold.* The value of one daric was five or six dollars. On one side of the coin was the figure of a king with bow and javelin, and on the other an irregular depression.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chaldean dynasty in Babylon was short-lived, only eighty-eight years in all. Nebuchadnezzar died in 561 B. C., and left his great, well-organized empire to his weak son Evil-Merodach. (From 2 K. 25.27-30 we learn that this king freed Jehoiachim after an imprisonment of 37 years, and gave him a place at the royal table.) After a reign of two years Evil-Merodach was murdered by one of his officers, Nergalsharuzur, or Nergalsharezer as he is called in Jer. 39.3, who commanded Nebuchadnezzar's army at the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. Though he prayed to his god Marduk for a long life and a stable throne, he lived only four years. Nine months after his young son Labashi-Marduk became king, some of the nobles formed a conspiracy, murdered the king, and placed Nabonidus, one of their own number, on the throne. Nabonidus strengthened the wall of Babylon along the Euphrates, for danger threatened from the north, but his great interest centred in restoring and adorning the temples of the gods. Because he did more for the old Babylonian and Assyrian gods than for the favorite gods of the people—Marduk, Bel, and Nebo—his people grew to hate him, especially after he left his capital for Tema and the great religious feasts could no longer be observed without the presence of the king.

Meanwhile Cyrus was acquiring his title of the Great. In 559 B. C. he was king of Anshan, the native name of the little state among the mountains northeast of Babylon, which the Assyrians and Hebrews called Elam. In 549 B. C. he made himself master of Media; by 546 B. C. he had acquired the title of king of Persia. Next he extended his empire westward to the Ægean Sea. In 538 B. C. he captured Nabonidus and Babylon, and adopted the title of "King of Babylon and King of Countries." He was in truth master of all the world then worth having, with the exception of Egypt. For the account of the fall of Babylon, see the Historical Background of Lesson VII.

Cyrus was a great statesman as well as general, and it was part of his wise policy to allow captives in his realm, Jews and others, to return to their native lands. Ezekiel's prophecy of the restoration was fulfilled.

For an account of the Book of Ezra see pages 24-25 of the Introduction.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

In advance of the lesson period, have one of your pupils sketch on your blackboard the map of the Old Testament world, p. 53. Locate Susa, or Shushan, the capital of Persia, Ecbatana, the capital of Media, and Babylon, of Babylonia. In class trace the route of the return which probably led up the Euphrates River, past the ancient city of Haran, Abraham's old resting-place, and on to the fords of Carchemish, whence it turned southwest and south through Syria and Samaria to Jerusalem. The similar journey of Ezra and his company took four months (Ezra 7.8, 9).

Symbolic Figure of Cyrus and his Name in Cuneiform Characters

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Sketch on the blackboard before your class a house, bare trees, and falling snow. A few strokes will answer the purpose, for the ready imagination of your pupils as you speak of the loneliness of the scene will supply all deficiencies. Talk about the loneliness of those exiles in Babylon who longed for their old homes and mourned for their beautiful temple at Jerusalem, which had been destroyed. Then with a yellow crayon fill the windows of your house on the blackboard with light. The scene will be transformed for your little people; they will see a vision of good cheer. So God put it into the heart of the great king Cyrus to light up their lives with hope, for he said that they might go back to Jerusalem and build a new temple in which to worship God. Illustrate how God brought the exiles back through the king's agency by the dialogue between the father and his little daughter, p. 394, and also by the thought of Dr. Abbott, which precedes this dialogue. Trace on the blackboard the outline map, p. 53, and contrast the sad journey to Babylon of the people after the destruction of Jerusalem with their joyous going back to Judea. If you have time, show how this journey was made possible by the help of the friends who stayed in Babylon and arouse in your pupils the will to help in this way, third topic.

Judah in the Time of Ezra

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Briefly review the reasons for the Captivity, recalling the three deportations (the northern tribes from Samaria, the Judeans in the time of Jehoiachin, and after the fall of Jerusalem) and the conditions of life in exile.

Then question your pupils about the release from the captivity in Egypt, bringing out the trouble the Hebrews had in getting away from Pharaoh. Recall how they "asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment, and Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked." Then contrast with this exodus that of the Jews under Cyrus, his freely granted permission, his wide-spread proclamation, his bidding the people help those who returned with silver and gold and goods and beasts as well as freewill offerings for the temple.

For Older Pupils. After making clear the historical connection, p. 391, and the reasons for Cyrus' proclamation, p. 393, discuss the choice which the peo-

ple had to make, the arguments for and against returning. Tell what became of those who remained, Dr. Banks' article, p. 389, and compare with their spirit that of the Jews of the present day whose watchword at their annual passover feast is "next year in Jerusalem," but whose real attitude was thus expressed by Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Sinai Congregation, Chicago, in an address before the Central Conference of American Rabbis: "The Zionists and nationalistic Jews who see in the Jewish race and the restoration of Palestine the chief concern of Judaism, who have prayed for years for a return to Zion, would drop dead with the shock if they had to go back."

In July, 1909, for the first time since the destruction by the Romans under Titus in 70 A. D. of the third and largest temple that was built by Herod, the Jews were allowed to enter the site of their temple and worship there. During all these nineteen hundred years devout Jews could only worship and pray outside the walls. For twelve centuries past Moslem soldiers have stood on guard at the gates, and have turned away or slain all who tried to enter, though during the last generation Christians have been allowed to enter under guard on payment of a fee. Under the new régime in Turkey all religions are now officially recognized, and at last the Jews are coming into their own.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I How God Works

Jehovah stirred up the Spirit of Cyrus. From the famous cylinder of Cyrus these statements have been translated: Marduk, the great god of the Babylonians, searched through all lands, he saw him, and he sought the righteous prince after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. Cyrus, king of Anshan, he called by name, to sovereignty over the whole world he appointed him. ... May all the gods whom I brought in to their own cities daily before Bel and Nabu pray that I may have a long life, may they speak a gracious word for me, and may they say to Marduk, my lord, "Cyrus, the king who worships thee, and Cambyses his son." Cyrus' proclamation sounds as though he worshipped Jehovah the only true God, but his cylinder inscription shows that he was the worshipper of many gods and the special worshipper of the god Marduk. He was ready to worship Jehovah the God of the Jews just as he was to worship the gods of the Babylonians.

And what was his own motive in allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple? This permission was a part of his policy as king. His predecessors on the throne of Babylon had deemed it wise to deport conquered peoples to Babylonia and fill their places with imported people: Cyrus deemed the opposite a wise procedure, and he gained the good-will of his subjects by his generous dealings with them. Moreover, though he had made himself master of Western Asia, he still had the conquest of Egypt in view: he was far-sighted and must have recognized that a grateful people dwelling in Judæa, the province bordering on Egypt, and the one which must be the basis of a campaign against the land of the Pharaohs, would be of great service to him.

How then can the sacred historian say that Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus? Dr. Maclaren answers: "The historian digs deeper to find the true cause. Cyrus was God's instrument, and the statesman's insight was the result of God's illumination. The divine causality moves men, when they move themselves. It was not only in the history of the chosen people that God's purpose is wrought out by more or less conscious and willing instruments. The principle laid down by the writer of the Book of Ezra is of universal application, and the true 'philosophy of history' must recognize as underlying all other so-called causes and forces the one uncaused Cause, of whose purposes kings and politicians are the executants, even while they freely act according to their own judgments, and, it may be, in utter unconsciousness of Him. It concerns our tranquility and hopefulness, in the contemplation of the bewildering maze and often heart-breaking tragedy of mundane affairs, to hold fast by the conviction that God's unseen hand moves the pieces on the board and presides over all the complications. Would that all politicians recognized the fact as clearly as this historian did!"

There are Many Doors to Things Divine. By the minds of the religious

people of that age Cyrus would not have been reckoned a religious man. In the popular estimation of Israel he was one of the heathen. We should call him in our day a non-churchgoer. Yet this man outside the pale of God's visible temple, is made the subject of one of the divinest inspirations that ever flashed through a human soul, "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." Through this inspiration he published a decree which permitted the children of Israel to return to their own land. I wonder that with their narrow views the children of Israel did not refuse from such a source the gift of their own liberation. I have known a congregation to reject a very large charitable subscription on the ground that it came from a dealer in the wine trade. The Israelites received a greater boon than that, and from a still more unlikely source. They had been offered a charter of freedom by a foreign king with a foreign religion. Should we not expect that they would have declined to be indebted for their nationality to any faith outside their nation? They did not so decline, and that is to their honor. It looks as if their foreign environment had, for the time being, broadened them. At all events, their experience should broaden us. It should teach us that neither God nor His worship nor His inspiration is confined to temples made with hands, that there are more doors to things Divine than man has dreamed of in his philosophy, and that the channels of religious communion are wider and deeper than we know. *George Matheson*, in *Rests by the River.*

The Source of Power. The *Epworth Herald* records a conversation held between a well-known English evangelist and his little daughter, who was paralyzed. He entered the house one day with a package for his wife, and said to the little girl, "Where is mother?" "Mother is upstairs," she replied. "Well, I have a package for her." "Let me carry the package to mother." "Why, Minnie dear, how can you carry the package? You cannot carry yourself." "Oh, no, papa; but you give me the package and I will carry the package and you will carry me." Is it not in this way that we carry on the Lord's work? We seem to be doing it ourselves, but we can do it only because He enables us.

II The Return from Exile

The Exile a Blessing. When the Emperor of Morocco inquires about one who has just died, he never hears the word "death" in the answer, but is told that "his destiny is closed." So long-threatened were the fall of Jerusalem and the Captivity, so complete was the destruction of temple and city, so absolute was the death of the Hebrew nation, that it must come almost as a surprise to one who has not followed the prophecies and hears for the first time the history, to be told that the destiny of the Jews was not closed at the Exile, that it was rather beginning, that they were only being prepared for their supreme mission to the world.

The exile that had been so great a calamity was really a blessing in disguise. We have heard much recently about the devastation in the cotton country of the South caused by the boll-weevil. A visitor just returned from that region says he had expected to find every one depressed over the situation, but instead the people declared the boll-weevil a blessing in disguise, although they admitted that it was a good deal of disguise. One scientist told him: "The State of Louisiana ought to build a great bronze monument to the boll-weevil—put it up in the city capitol square and label it 'the Savior of Louisiana.'"

Because cotton was a certain crop and could be stored indefinitely, it was considered as good as gold, and cotton producers could borrow money before it was raised. Accordingly great numbers of them were always borrowing and always in debt, no better off at the end of a season than at the beginning. Now the depredations of the boll-weevil have put a stop to all this, and the cotton industry is everywhere being managed on a sound economic basis.

So the exile was a blessing considerably disguised at first, but in the end gratefully acknowledged.

The Spirit of Those Homeward Bound. It is often repeated that it was a Nation that was carried into captivity, but a church that returned: the Jewish Church took the place of the Hebrew people. When they went into exile, the great majority could scarcely be distinguished from their heathen neighbors;

they were indeed sifted during the exile, and those who returned were passionately loyal to Jehovah. As Dr. Maclaren expresses it, colors burned in on china are permanent, and the furnace of bondage had, at least, effected this, that it fixed monotheism forever in the inmost substance of the Jewish people.

The exile effected more. The people who returned were under the guidance of priests, and they went back for the express purpose of rebuilding the temple and restoring worship there in accordance with their ritual. They acknowledged that the sins of their nation had merited the punishment of exile, and they eagerly desired reconciliation with Jehovah. "They went out without a national knowledge of the Law, and they returned with a passion for the Law which redeems the commonplaces of their life with vast sublimities."

Moreover, their conception of Jehovah was different on their return. Where formerly they had thought of Him mainly as the God of Israel, the God of Canaan alone, they now knew Him to be God of the universe. Professor Kent explains this: "Absorbed among races more powerful and more highly civilized than they, the Jews were forced to admit that they were only one of the weak families of the earth. The experience was painful but valuable. It not only broadened their conception of Jehovah's character, but also led them to recognize their complete dependence upon Him. They saw for the first time that they were unique among nations simply because of their unique relation to the God of the universe. Their attitude changed toward the great heathen world about them. No longer could they ignore their neighbors, or merely consider them when they disturbed the peace of Israel. Beginning with the period of the exile, the nations figure prominently in the utterances of the prophets. From the same epoch dates the rise of a broad religious philosophy of history. The nations, drawn together by force, began dimly to recognize that they belonged to one family; while certain inspired Jews grasped the greater truth that one Father stood at the head of that family, and that Cyrus was Jehovah's anointed as truly as was Jehoiachin. The exile proved, as Amos predicted (Am. 9.9), a sifting process, for it effectually separated the faint-hearted and sceptical from the brave and true. Many—perhaps the majority—were found wanting; but those who endured the ordeal and remained faithful were devoted to the worship of the Jehovah of the prophets with a passionate zeal, which was in striking contrast to the popular indifference that daunted pre-exilic prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah. Bound together, not by political bands, but by common suffering the common faith, the royal few proved the nucleus out of which, during the succeeding centuries, grew the Jewish church."

The Christian's Exile and Home-Coming. On the Island of Guernsey visitors are shown the house occupied by Victor Hugo during his banishment from France. He calls it in his dedication, "My present refuge and probably my future tomb." The house remains just as he left it, and very interesting are the mottoes and aphorisms in many unexpected places. Among them are: *L'Espoir est ma Force*—Hope is my strength; *A Deo, ad Deum*—From God to God; and *Life is an Exile.*

Seventy years was the allotted time of the Babylonian Exile; three score years and ten is the allotted time of Life's Exile. Victor Hugo looked forward to death as to a home-coming—such a home-coming as is expressed in this beautiful Scotch Song:

I am far frae my hame, an' I'm weary aftenwhiles,
For the langed-for hame-bringing, an' my Father's welcome smiles,
I'll ne'er be fu' content until my een do see
The gowden gates of heaven, an' my ain countrie.

The earth is flecked wi' flowers, many-tinted, fresh and gay;
The birdies warble blithely, for my Father made them sae;
But these sichts an' these soun's will as naething be to me
When I hear the angels singing in my ain countrie.

I've his gude word of promise that some gladsome day the King
To his ain royal palace his banished hame will bring
Wi' een and wi' heart running owre we shall see
The King in his beauty an' our ain countrie.

He's gratefu' that hath promised, he'll surely come again,
He'll keep his tryst wi' me, at what hour I dinna ken;
But he bids me still to wait, an' ready aye to be
To gang at ony moment to my ain countrie.

III Missionary Topic—Helping with Silver and Gold

They strengthened their Hands. King Cyrus granted no sum of money and levied no tax for the expense of his subjects' return to Judea; he merely counseled the people to help them with silver and gold. Neighborly good-will was shown everywhere, for "all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things." The Jews who remained in the land of their captivity had a share in the work of the restoration of the temple and its worship at Jerusalem as well as those who returned and did the work.

"I don't see you," said a father when his son proudly brought home a group picture in which he claimed to be represented. "Why, you see that big, fat boy there, don't you, father? Well, I am right behind him!" The Jews who remained occupied a similar position; they were right behind the prominent ones in the picture, but it was their assistance that made possible the return of their more stout-hearted and religious brothers.

The invisible position behind the active worker does not seem so glorious, but it is usually equally essential. Dr. Watkinson uses for another purpose an illustration which is pertinent here. In the valley of Chamouni at the foot of Mount Blanc there is a notable monument. It represents two figures, the splendid representation of Saussure, the great scientist, and by his side the image of Balmat, the guide. Saussure was a great thinker; Balmat was a poor peasant. But Saussure would never have scaled Mount Blanc if Balmet had not shown him the way; and so the people, with a fine instinct, put them both on the monument—the great philosopher and the little peasant—for together they gave to mankind a new world of science and of romance. The obscure helper does not often get on the monument; but he deserves the position.

Our Share in the Work. Awhile ago Gypsy Smith was operated upon by an Indianapolis specialist and relieved of a throat trouble which had threatened to prevent his preaching. He feared that his bill would be more than he could well pay, but when he asked for it the specialist said: "Two of my sons have been converted during your meetings here: will you give me your bill for that? How much is this going to be worth to me? I cannot preach; but if I can help you to preach with ease and comfort, I have a share in your work."

A helpless invalid in Casey, Ill., who could not lift her head from her pillow could do little toward sharing in the work of foreign missionaries, one would think, yet by the use of her needle she earned more than $17,000 for that cause.

Are we doing all that we can to strengthen the hundreds of missionaries at home and abroad? Every year twice as much money is spent in our country for chewing gum as for foreign missions and twenty-five times as much for confectionery.

The Duty of those who stay at Home. Can the nine hundred and ninety-nine who stay at home support the one who go to the front? That is a very serious problem. It would mean probably forty million dollars a year from North America for foreign mission work. When we realize that every year there is spent for Christian work here in the United States alone more than two hundred and fifty million dollars, it ought not to seem a very impossible thing to raise as much as forty million dollars for the rest of the world.

Do you realize that if the members of the Church of Christ were to give one postage-stamp a week to this work, it would amount to twenty-million dollars a year? That if they gave the equivalent of a dish of ice-cream a week, it would be a hundred million dollars a year? If they gave the equivalent of one hour's unskilled labor a week to the evangelization of the non-Christian world, it would be one hundred and fifty million dollars a year? *The Missionary Review.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Nothing is too great for any one to do if it is conducted in partnership with the Eternal. *Lyman Abbott.*

Almighty God has his plans and methods for human progress. *McKinley.*

There is a Hand that bends our deeds
To mightier issues than we planned. *Richard Hovey.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

No one has wandered so far that he cannot be restored to his Father's home.

Do you ask what you can do for God? Ask rather what God can do for others through you. Be alert to respond to God's stirring of your heart.

To what extent this week can you strengthen the hands of active workers in missionary and other good causes?

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

In the first year that Cyrus king of Persia ruled over the Babylonian Empire, he was divinely impelled to issue a proclamation throughout his kingdom permitting the return of the exiles to Jerusalem, a return prophesied by Jeremiah. All the kingdoms of the earth have been given me by Jehovah, so the proclamation declared; and he has charged me to build a temple at Jerusalem. Let whosoever will of his people go to Jerusalem and build the temple, and let those who remain aid those who go with gold and silver and goods and beasts and free-will offerings for the house of God.

Then the priests and Levites and all whose spirit God had stirred up, prepared to go back and rebuild his temple, and those who remained aided them with money and gifts. Cyrus restored to them the temple treasures which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon, through Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar,—plates and platters and knives and bowls, in all five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver.

The number of those who returned was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, besides men-servants and maid-servants, and they had more than seven hundred horses, two hundred mules, four hundred camels, and six thousand asses. When they reached Judah they established themselves in their various cities, and offered willingly for the house of God at Jerusalem.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The destiny of no church need be closed. 2. Polytheism.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Into what four groups were the Jews at this time divided, and what can you tell about each group? (Clipping, p. 401.) 2. What was the first thing done on the return of the Jews to Jerusalem? 3. Read the prophecy of Jer. 33.10-11, which verse 11 of our lesson shows was fulfilled. 4. Who were the prophets at this time? (Ezra 5.1.) 5. Read the Book of Haggai. 6. What was the apparel of the priests as told in Ex. 39.27-29? 7. Who occupied Samaria after the rulers of the Northern tribes were taken to Assyria? (2 K. 17.23, 24.) 8. What does 2 K. tells us about their worship? (2 K. 17. 25-41.) 9. When was the building of the second temple resumed? (Ezra 4.24.) 10. What letter was then sent to Darius? (Chap. 5.) 11. What was Darius' answer? (Chap. 6.) 12. When was this second temple completed? (Ezra 6.15.) 13. How was it dedicated? (Ezra 6:16-18.) 14. How many Jewish temples occupied the same site; when was each built, and when and by whom was each destroyed? (Clipping, p. 401.) 15. What building now occupies the same site?

Questions to think about. 1. What were the names of the three successive temples on the same site? (Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's.) 2. What reasons did the people have for gratitude to God? 3. What greater reasons have we? 4. Why did the old men weep? 5. Why did the young men shout for joy? 6. Explain the origin of the feud between Jews and Samaritans, and tell what the condition was in the time of Christ. 7. Was the refusal to let the Samaritans help in building the temple right or wrong? Why?

Note-book and Memory Work. Commit to memory the most helpful words of the lesson. (Verse 11.) Begin a new book entitled, After the Return from Exile. Write the first chapter: An account of the Return.

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 22

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE LAID

Golden Text

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Ps. 100.4.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Ezra 3.1-13. The Laying of the Foundations. **T.** Ezra 4.1-24. The Work stopped by Enemies. **W.** Hag. 1.1-15. Call of Haggai to Resume Building. **T.** Hag. 2.1-23. The Latter Glory of this House to be Greater. **F.** Zech. 4.1-14. "Not by Might nor by Power but my Spirit." **S.** Ezra 5.1-17. The Building of the Temple Resumed. **S.** Ezra 6.1-22. The Temple Dedicated with Joy. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Ezra 3.1-4.5 PRINT 3.8-4.5 COMMIT 3.11

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the Captivity unto Jerusalem, and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of Jehovah. 9 Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to have the oversight of the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, *saying,* For he is good, for his lovingkindness *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' *houses,* the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the Captivity were building a temple unto Jehovah, the God of Israel; 2 then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' *houses,* and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither. 3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' *houses* of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, 5 and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

Read Ezra 2-6 and Haggai.

8. *The second year, second month.* April-May of 536 B. C.—*Unto the house of God at Jerusalem.* The site of the temple. See 2.68.—*Began...and appointed.*

Began preparations for building by appointing.—*Zerubbabel.* Whom Cyrus appointed governor; see explanation of the name Sheshbazzar, p. 389, and Haggai 1.14.—*Jeshua.* The high priest, Haggai 1.14.—*Jozadak.* Mentioned among those taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, 1 Ch. 6.15.—*Have the oversight of the work.* Or, *set forward the work,* RVm.

9. This verse names the Levites appointed.—*Jeshua.* Not the high priest of the last verse, but a Levite mentioned in 2.40.—*Together.* Heb. *as one,* RVm.

10. *The builders.* The workmen engaged by the Levites.—*They set the priests.* According to some MSS., *the priests stood,* RVm.—*In their apparel.* In their priestly robes described in Ex. 39.27-29.—*With trumpets.* See Num. 10.8.—*After the order of David.* See 1 Ch. 25.1-8; 16.4-6.

11. *They sang one to another.* They were probably divided into two choirs which sang alternately.—*For he is good.* See 1 Ch. 16.34, and Jeremiah's prophecy, 33.10, 11.

12. *The first house.* Solomon's temple, which was destroyed about fifty years before this time.—*Wept with a loud voice.* "The thoughts of the disasters of their youth, the sorrows of their manhood in exile, the gaps in their numbers, the insignificance of the new community by comparison with the splendor of Messianic hopes (Is. 60), were enough to cause sadness and weeping" (*Ryle*). "The old men did not go with deliberate intention of marring the brightness of the occasion with their untimely tears, their reason for weeping was the only valid reason, they could not help it" (*Jordan*). "A sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things" (*Tennyson*).—*Many shouted aloud for joy.* The younger portion were hopeful and joyful.

13. *Could not discern.* The weeping and shouting made a confused sound.

4.1. *The adversaries.* The Samaritans were not "adversaries" of the Jews till after the event here recorded, which explains the origin of that hostility so often referred to in the Gospels.—*Judah and Benjamin.* The majority of the exiles who returned belonged to these tribes.—*Seek.* Worship. See 2 K. 17.28, 32, 33. Review the conversation of the Samaritan woman with Jesus about worship, John 4.—*Esar-haddon.* Who followed Sennacherib on the throne of Assyria, reigning from 681 to 668 B. C.—*Who brought us up hither.* To occupy the place of the Jews deported to Assyria after the fall of Samaria.

3. *As king Cyrus hath commanded us.* "The fact that they were not authorized to extend to others the privileges conferred upon them by Cyrus was probably not the only motive that actuated the Jews. They no doubt felt that to admit to closer association such a hybrid country as the Samaritans, with their mixture of Hebrew and heathen rites of worship, would neutralize the impulse in the direction of purity of religion which they had derived from their experiences as exiles" (*Dummelow*). "If we are impartial, we can see that at this stage a certain amount of exclusiveness was absolutely necessary; it was only by fierce struggle and stern resistance that men preserved the rich results of all these years of toil and discipline" (*Jordan*).

4. *The people of the land.* The Samaritans and other neighbors of the returning Jews.—*Weakened the hands.* Put obstacles in their way; took away their courage; compare Jer. 38.4.—*Troubled.* Or, *terrified,* RVm. How they prevented the building of the walls of Jerusalem in the reigns of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes (who followed Darius) is told in Ezra 4.6-23, which interrupts the narrative. How the building of the temple was brought to completion in the reign of Darius is told in 4.24-6.15.

5. *Hired counsellors against them.* This does not necessarily imply that bribes were given to the king's ministers. They paid officials, probably connected with the satrapy of Syria, to make unfavorable reports at the king's court respecting "the people of Judah."—*Their purpose.* Of rebuilding the temple. *All the days of Cyrus.* He died five years later.—*Even until the reign of Darius.* From 536 to 520: during the remaining reign of Cyrus, the reigns of Cambyses, and of Gomates the pseudo-Smerdis, and one year of Darius Hystaspis. The completion and dedication of the temple is told in Ezra 6.15-18.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

11. *Because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid.* Those who looked eagerly forward to the return from Babylon were inspired to paint the

glories of the new movement in glowing colors, which now shine out in strong contrast to the hard, dull reality. But with this and many other examples still before us we still thank God for poets, idealists and enthusiasts, who make the desert of hard fact to "rejoice and blossom as the rose," and throw a halo of glory around "the day of small things." This small movement is a real link in the golden chain of God's providence, and turns out to be a thing of larger, more lasting significance than even the richest poetry had suggested. All the poetry is justified when we take a long view. "The ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This is noble language, fit indeed for a description of heaven; but when the Sons of the Captivity returned to Zion what they found was not heaven, but a very mean, miserable bit of earth, a city in ruins, and its very limited territory surrounded by envious and troublesome neighbors.

From the Darius Monument at Behistun

What use was there in these pious people struggling back to their old home, with such heroic faith and in the face of such tremendous difficulties (Ezra 7.21)?

The men who led the return, as well as those who came later to support the cause, felt that this business was of infinite importance to themselves; they must put patriotism and piety before all personal considerations (Neh. 1). To stifle spiritual enthusiasm and conquer deep convictions would have been in the case of these men to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage; or to end by despising themselves and despairing of all noble effort.

In responding to the call of duty they did a work of great importance to those who were to come after. The second temple became a centre towards which the Jews scattered throughout the world could turn in reverence and hope, the symbol of racial and religious unity. In distant lands, and among strange people, the pious Jew could greet the coming festival with the sweet words, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of Jehovah." Thus the worship was perpetuated and the highest religion kept its place until the Christ came to complete its revelation and to enlarge its mission. That being so, the work of these men was important for us; we who are so distant from them in time and so different in circumstances owe to them a deep debt of gratitude. Condensed from *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals,* by *Dr. W. G. Jordan.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

7. They gave money unto the masons. The money may have been gold and silver; perhaps it was clay. Loftus unearthed at Warka about forty "small tablets of unbaked clay, covered on both sides with minute characters." They were in length from two inches to four and a half, and in breadth from one inch to three inches. They had on them the names of various kings (among them that of Cyrus), and dates ranging from 626 to 525 B. C. Sir Henry Rawlinson examined the inscriptions and said: "The tablets seem to be notes issued by the government for the convenience of circulation, representing a certain value, which was always expressed in measures of weight, of gold or silver,

and redeemable on presentation at the royal treasury." Loftus adds: "These tablets were, in point of fact, the equivalents of our own bank-notes, and prove that a system of artificial currency prevailed in Babylonia, and also in Persia at a very early age." *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Manners and Customs.*

4.5. *Darius king of Persia.* Among the treasures of the British Museum is the cylinder seal of this king. On it is inscribed in the Old Persian Scythian, and Babylonian languages the words: "I am Darius the Great." It represents the king hunting lions "under the protecting presence of Ahurmazda, his god."

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

At the time of our lesson the Jews were located in four main groups: the hybrid population of Samaria, the refugees in Egypt, the exiles who remained in Babylonia, and the remnant who returned to Judah.

When the Assyrians conquered Samaria, as we have seen (2 K. 17.23-41), colonists from Babylonia were brought to Samaria to occupy the place of the deported Jews. Through intermarriage with the Jews who were allowed to remain, there was an admixture of Jewish blood in their descendants' veins, which gave them a certain kinship with the Jews—a fact which the latter in the time of Christ refused to admit. The Babylonians had found the land overrun by lions and other wild beasts, and they besought the Assyrian king Esar-haddon to send them an Israelitish priest to teach them how to worship "the God of the land," for they thought this affliction had come upon them through their failure to worship Him. Their request was granted, and they added the worship of Jehovah to that of their many gods. Therefore they could say when they asked the returned exiles for a share in the work of rebuilding the temple, that they sought their God as they did, and sacrificed unto him since the days of Esar-haddon.

The Jews who had fled to Egypt were probably quickly absorbed in the Gentile population there. About the fate of those who remained in Babylonia we heard last week, p. 389. Lessons VI and VII concern Babylonian Jews, but in the remaining lessons of the quarter we follow the fortunes of the brave remnant who returned to Judah to rebuild at Jerusalem the temple and re-establish the old-time worship there.

After a short stay in the cities of Judah the people gathered at Jerusalem in the seventh month to celebrate the feast of tabernacles. The first concern of their leaders, Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest, had been to rebuild the altar of the burnt offering, and there the offerings were sacrificed according to the law of Moses. Money was also contributed to pay the masons and carpenters, and furnish food and drink and oil to the men of Sidon and Tyre who brought cedar-trees from Lebanon to Joppa on the coast, whence they were carried to Jerusalem for the temple.

Our lesson tells us about the laying of the foundation or corner-stone of the temple, B. C. 536. Opposition of adversaries stopped the building during the reigns of Cambyses and Smerdis. The colonists were busy in preparing their new homes and restoring the ancient cities, starting farms and constructing roads, and they began to argue that God's time for restoring His house had not yet come. Droughts came and crops were bad, a token of God's displeasure they believed, and the preaching of their prophets Haggai and Zechariah aroused them from their indifference. When Darius Hystaspis came to the Persian throne many subject nations asserted their independence and had to be conquered; but the little Jewish colony remained loyal. In the second year of his reign, 520 B. C. the attempt to build the temple was renewed. Chapter five tells how Persian officials in Judea sent a letter to Darius inquiring whether the Jews had permission to do this, and chapter vi gives the Persian king's answer authorizing the work. Four years later, B. C. 516, the temple was completed.

Three Jewish temples were built upon the same site. The first one, Solomon's, was built in 967 B. C. and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B. C.; the second one, Zerubbabel's, was built in 516 B. C.; and in 30 B. C. the reconstructed temple of Herod was begun. Herod's temple was destroyed during the siege of the Romans in 70 A. D.

In 136 A. D. Emperor Hadrian dedicated a temple on this site to Jupiter, and in 637 the present Mosque of Omar was built.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Review last Sunday's lesson, describing the return from Babylonia of the long procession of people with their camels and donkeys and horses. Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah which their grandfathers had left so long before they found in ruins. Describe the building of their homes and the working of the farms. Very soon they all gathered in Jerusalem for a very happy time. They wished to build again their beautiful church, or temple as it was called. Describe the scene of our lesson, the stones of the foundation being laid one upon the other, the priests in their gay garments blowing their trumpets, the clashing of cymbals, the songs and the shouts of joy. The sorrow of the old people your pupils can not understand, and this may be omitted.

The second scene, the people who were really idol worshippers asking that they might help build the house of God, and when their help was refused, doing all they could to keep the Jews from building their church, may be told if there is time, but more important is the teaching of the lesson of the Golden Text, the duty of thanking God for His goodness. Tell about the children's letters to Santa Claus, in Suggestions for Beginning the Lesson, and adapt the second topic.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Explain what the Dead Letter Office at Washington is, and tell your pupils that each year at Christmas time thousands of letters are sent there addressed to Santa Claus which tell what gifts the writers want, but only one letter has come for him thanking him for what was received. Ask for what the Jews now back again in Jerusalem had to be thankful. Call for the verse committed to memory (assigned for this lesson), and see how many selected verse 11. What was the occasion on which this song of praise and gratitude was sung?

For Older Pupils. Begin with a talk about the difference between the actual hardships after the return and the golden dreams of the eager people, and about the great significance of this apparently small movement. See Dr. Jordan's words, p. 400.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Power of Ideals

The Temple was an Ideal. Of greater importance than houses or barns or vineyards to those returning exiles was the setting up of the altar where by sacrifice they communed with God. There could be an altar without a temple, but at their earliest opportunity was rightly begun the foundation of the Lord's house, which was to them both church and school-house.

One of the great elements of permanency in the Puritan race in this country, Dr. Lyman Abbott recalled in a recent sermon, lay in the fact that they brought their church and their school-house with them, and built the church and the school-house as quickly as they built their private dwellings. "I remember," he said, "going last summer through a region that had been devastated by fire, where all the houses had been swept away, and as our train passed through, one large, fine brick building stood out from the log houses and shingled shanties in which most of the people seemed to be living, and I asked my friend, 'What is that?' 'The school-house,' he replied. 'That, then, was saved from the fire?' 'No, that has been rebuilt since.' And I said, 'This community is laying its foundations broad and deep, and wise and well.'"

The temple stood for patriotism and religion. It was to them, "the chosen people of God," not an aggregation of stone and wood, but the medium of divine revelation, sacred as God Himself is sacred.

A Triumph of Sentiment. When the chime of bells was hoisted to the summit of the Campanile in Venice, and rung on St. Mark's day this year, in celebration of the rebuilding of the famous tower, they also proclaimed to all within sound of their remotest echoes that there is something in the world besides mere utility.

The old tower which was begun more than a thousand years ago, dominated

the city and the waters of the sea that surround the storied town. It was severely plain, in striking contrast to the gaudily colored St. Mark's Church and the ornate Doge's Palace, and it served no particular utilitarian purpose. Yet when it fell the Pope, formerly Patriarch of Venice, exclaimed, "The master of the house is gone!" And an old Venetian boatman said, "When I row along the quay there's a stab at my heart and I have to look away."

It is no wonder, then, that the town council voted to rebuild the tower, "where it was and as it was." Some of the columns of the original were so little damaged by their fall that they have been used again. Only one of the five bells of the chime escaped destruction when the tower fell. The metal of the others was gathered and recast at the expense of the Pope.

It is not to be expected that the new cities of America shall possess any structure for which the people feel so great an affection as that with which the Venetians evidently regard the tower that has watched over them for many generations; but the time has come when the sentimental value of architecture, of street planning and building, and of open parks is beginning to be respected in such a way that we may hope for the development of a genuine love for the beautiful. *Youth's Companion.*

II Enter into His Gates with Thanksgiving, and into His Courts with Praise

For He is Good.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?

questions the Lord of Job, and continues,

When the morning-stars sang together
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

The laying of the foundations of an earth or of the foundations of a temple is an occasion for song and joy.

The corner-stone of Zerubbabel's temple was laid at a time when the people were beset by poverty, enemies, and trials, but they believed it their duty to begin building the house of God, and they rejoiced in the great privilege. It is always a duty to rejoice at an opportunity for doing whatever God gives one to do, and whatever one's circumstances one has always occasion for praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, for He is always good, and His lovingkindness endures for ever toward all His people.

The goodness of God recognized by us is by far the least part of it, Dr. Watkinson reminds us in "The Education of the Heart." There is the goodness that we *overlook*. God's gifts are multiplied like the dew-drops or the snow-flakes, and, gliding into life just as silently, are easily undiscerned by careless eyes like ours. One day in the town of Sonora, in the southern mines of California, after a very heavy rain and freshet, a man was leading his mule-cart up the steep principal street, when his foot struck upon a large stone; he stooped down to remove it, and found it was a solid lump of gold, about twenty-five pounds weight, which had been exposed by the storm, and many hundreds of people had passed over it daily. So do we daily blindly trample on blessings richer than all the wealth of California. And there is the goodness we *misconstrue*. We count sublime things commonplace, and reckon as losses and disappointments the discipline which brings incorruptible treasure. The "benefits" of God are not the pleasant things merely, but all the things of pain and tears.

Thankfulness a Royal Debt. God *expects* our thanks. We cannot believe that the living God is indifferent to the spirit in which His boons are accepted. Our nature teaches us better. He whom we worship is not the great machinist, chemist, or artist—such a being might be insensible to gratitude; but we give thanks "to God; even the Father," and it is impossible to think that love and gratitude have no place in our relation to Him. "We are His offspring," and we are not insensible to gratitude. *W. L. Watkinson.*

The Influence of a Child's Thanksgiving. Three times a day the hungry boys and girls sent from New York to the fresh-air homes in Connecticut bow their heads before eating and sing this grace:

God is great and God is good,
And we thank Him for this food.

Such a word of gratitude to God for His goodness spoken by a little child was once the means of bringing about great results. A young German named Hugo Hahn was home for his vacation when friends came with their little daughter to visit his family. Before each meal the child folded her hands and whispered her words of thanks. "Shall that little child thank God," said Hugo to himself, ashamed, "and I have never yet raised hands and eyes to Him in praise? Why do I not know how to pray?" He could not free himself from the thought of his ingratitude, and was thus led to give himself to his Maker. He resolved to bring the Gospel to those in distant lands who did not know God, and after seven years of preparation he went to South Africa and established a mission among the Hereros in the great desert region north of the Orange River, where he lived and worked for God till God called him to Himself.

"Singing our song as we go our way,
Do we know who may be leaning to hear?"

III Foundation-Laying

Foundation-Laying in Empire Building. Our lesson's account forcibly recalls the words of Benjamin Franklin when our great nation's foundations were laid. At the convention held in 1787 to frame the Constitution, said: In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence. To that kind Providence we owe the opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend, or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance? I have lived a long time—eighty-one years—and the longer I live the more convincing proof I see that God governs in the affairs of man. And, if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings that "except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this, and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.

The Foreman's Philosophy. "I've built a lot of houses in my day, and know a lot of folks," said the old foreman thoughtfully. "'Nd there's one thing that allers sets me thinkin'. Most of the folks I've built houses for seemed to forgit entirely thet there's two kinds of things to a house—things thet kin be easy changed, 'nd things thet can't. 'Nd when you look at what else folks is building fer themselves besides houses—characters, 'nd lives, 'nd all that—they're jest as forgitful there, again, seems to me.

"There's the cellar of a house now: when thet's dug, and the foundation's laid, 'nd the house goin' up to the second floor, 'taint much good to begin thinkin' how you'd really like that cellar to be. But thet's just the way some folks do. 'Now I come to think of it,' they say, 'this cellar isn't high enough. The winders don't give enough light nor air, 'nd there ain't no room fer the furnace flues to rise, 'nd the drains ought to run above ground, and not way under the cellar floor.' Like as not its all true; but they'd ought to hev settled that with the contractor before the fust shovelful of earth was dug. Still they ain't no foolisher than the folks thet'll not take an education, nor keep out of bad company when they're young, 'nd yet expect to have their lives all satisfactory when they're older—no, sir!

"Then, after the stairs is in, some folks make a fuss 'nd say it 'ud hev been better to hev them in another place; 'nd they'd like to change the shape 'nd size of some of the rooms, 'nd they're real mad when you tell 'em it can't be done. You wouldn't believe it, the things folks ask me to do—things you can't do short of tearin' down the hull buildin' 'nd startin' it over agin from the ground up. There's things you kin do, of course,—closets, 'nd roofs, 'nd porches 'nd sich—but when a house has got beyond the beginnings you can't change the main lines, 'nd thet's all there is of it. 'Nd yet there's plenty of people thet expects to change their lives 'nd their naters when they get halfway through—kinder git converted some time or other, when they've had enough

of the world 'nd its ways, 'nd make real fine first-rate Christians out of themselves. But thet ain't the way a good house nor a good Christian is built; it has to be from the ground up, stickin' to the plan all the while. Time to begin is in the beginnin' when you're young—yes, sir, every time!" And the foreman shut up his two-foot rule with a snap, and went off to oversee the laying of the hall floor. *Priscilla Leonard,* in *The Classmate.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Lift the voice of praise against cares. *H. W. Beecher.*

The trustful heart finds occasion for unmingled praise in the most mingled cup of joy and sorrow. *Alexander Maclaren.*

I've always thet ef I had my choice, an' my life could express worship, I'd choose for it to be praise. *Ruth McEnery Stuart.*

The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. 1 Cor. 3.17.

For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build. *Longfellow.*

Let the optimism of our anticipation drown the pessimism of retrospection. *F. B. Meyer.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

We are all foundation-layers or builders on that structure which is the image of God: how are we working? Do these words of Bishop Phillips Brooks apply to our lives? "You have cramped your life, you have made it small and narrow. But never dare to think that this was God's plan for your life. He drew its architecture on a lordly scale. He built you to be temples of the Holy Spirit."

At the laying of the foundation of the second temple there were present those who strengthened the hands of the workers—were it only by sounding the trumpets and cymbals—and there were also present those who weakened the workers' hands. I will strive always to belong to the strengtheners, and will find and use an opportunity to prove this each day this week.

I will cultivate the spirit of thankfulness for all God's loving kindness to me.

The old men could not enter into the hopefulness and joy of the young men, and the young men probably had scant sympathy for the longing and sorrow of the old men. The young and the old should make an effort to understand and sympathize with each other.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The viewpoints of the old men and the young men: the good old days and the golden days to come.

2. Were the Jews narrow and bigoted, or wise and loyal? The good and the evil of "liberality in religion" to-day.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Who wrote the Psalms, and how were they used by the Hebrews? (Clipping, p. 408.) 2. What is this Psalm called in the Revised Version? 3. What is the meaning of the word *Selah?* (Bible dictionaries; clipping, p. 407.) 4. Read the 111th Psalm. 5. Read the 32d Psalm.

Questions to think about. 1. What is "thy land," verse 1, and why is it so called? 2. What does the last part of the first verse mean? 3. For whom does "Jacob" stand, and why so used? 4. What does the word *quicken,* verse 6, mean? 5. Who were the "saints," verse 8? (Clipping, p. 407.) 6. What is the meaning of verse 10? (Clipping, p. 407.) 7. Make an outline of this Psalm. 8. How many Psalms can you repeat? 10. What Psalm do you like best?

Note-book and Memory Work. Commit this Psalm to memory.

In your book After the Return from Exile, write an account of the Laying of the Foundation of the Second Temple.

LESSON V—OCTOBER 29

A PSALM OF DELIVERANCE

Golden Text

The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Ps. 126.3.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Ps. 85.1-13. A Psalm of Deliverance. **T.** Ps. 137.1-9. The Songs of Captivity. **W.** Ps. 126.1-6. The Joy of the Returned. **T.** Ps. 122.1-9. Rejoicing in God's House. **F.** Ps. 124.1-8. Our Soul is Escaped from the Fowler. **S.** Isaiah 40.1-31. "Comfort ye, Comfort ye, my People." **S.** Zeph. 3.1-20. "Sing, O Daughter of Zion." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Psalm 85 COMMIT vv. 10, 11

1 Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land;
Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.
2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;
Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.
3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath;
Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.
4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.
5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not quicken us again,
That thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah,
And grant us thy salvation.
8 I will bear what God Jehovah will speak;
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:
But let them not turn again to folly.
9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him,
That glory may dwell in our land.
10 Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
11 Truth springeth out of the earth;
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.
12 Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good;
And our land shall yield its increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him,
And shall make his footsteps a way *to walk in.*

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. Verses 1-3 look back to the exile.—*Thou hast been favorable unto thy land.* Psalm 77, which is appropriate for the time of the exile, questions: Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? This Psalm, probably written after the exile, recognizes that the Lord has been favorable to His land and people. The verb is an aorist, as Dr. Briggs points out, and refers to a definite event in the past, probably the rebuilding of Jerusalem.—*Thy land.* Canaan was the Lord's chosen land as the Jews were His chosen people.—*Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.* Restored the Israelites from exile. *Jacob* was a term for themselves which the people loved.

2. *Thou hast covered all their sin.* Put it out of sight, remembrance.—*Selah.*

This word is found seventy-one times in the Psalms. Various explanations of its meaning are current, the usually accepted one being that it directs the musicians to give a musical interlude: the word is translated *interlude* in the Septuagint. It may mean "Repeat": to-day in a Jewish service any one in the congregation may call out "Selah," and the last part must be repeated.

3. *Taken away all thy wrath.* See Ps. 78. 38.—*From the fierceness of thine anger.* Compare Ps. 106.23; Ex. 32.12. Both the sin of the nation and God's righteous anger thereat are removed.

4. Verses 4-7 refer to present conditions.—*Turn us.* Or, *turn to us,* RVm. *Restore us,* as in the marginal rendering of the same expression in Ps. 80.3.—*O God of our salvation.* "God who had so often saved His people that He could be regarded as having salvation as a characteristic" (*Briggs*).—*Cause thine indignation toward us to cease.* They have again incurred God's displeasure.

5. "The questions imply a negative answer, for such a thing was incredible to the people of Jehovah, in view of the past experience of the nation" (*Briggs*).—*Draw out.* Prolong.—*To all generations.* "Shall sons suffer for their fathers and punishment become an entailed inheritance?" (*Spurgeon*).

6. *Wilt thou not quicken us again?* Make alive, revive. "The question implies a positive answer, for the 'again' is based on previous experience of quickening, that is, the revival of the nation by the impartation of new life and vigor to them" (*Briggs*).

8. Verses 8-13 are a bright picture of the future.—*I will hear what Jehovah will speak.* "Having offered earnest intercession for the afflicted but penitent nation, the sacred poet in the true spirit of faith awaits a response from the sacred oracle. He pauses in joyful confidence, and then in ecstatic triumph he gives utterance to his hopes in the richest form of song" (*Spurgeon*).—*He will speak peace.* See Ps. 29.11; peace from trouble.—*Saints.* His people. "The Hebrew word denotes those who are objects of Jehovah's lovingkindness. *Saint,* literally *servant,* as applied to Israel, expresses the relation in which Jehovah has placed the nation towards Himself, without necessarily implying that its character corresponds to its calling" (*Kirkpatrick*).

9. *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him.* "Faith knows that the saving God is always near at hand" (*Spurgeon*).—*That glory may dwell in our land.* This seems to refer to the Shechinah, the symbol of God's presence: this Ezekiel in his vision saw departing from the temple, Ezek. 10.18, and then returning, Ezek. 43.4. Another interpretation is that it is glory in a general sense, in contrast with the existing shame.

10. *Mercy, truth, righteousness, peace.* These attributes are all personified.—*Are met together.* "As angel messengers of Jehovah they have been on separate missions in different directions: returning from these missions they all meet in the Holy Land, the first pair are met together" (*Briggs.*)—*Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* Are united in love.

11. Whether the four attributes of verse 10 are divine or human is often discussed. Primarily they are divine, but this verse shows that "the restored community will reflect the attributes of God." "Earth carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness." "The far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves."

12. *Will give that which is good.* No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Ps. 84.11.

13. *Make his footsteps a way to walk in.* Or, *set us in the way of his steps,* RVm. "God teaches man to walk in His footsteps" (*Maclaren*). Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect, Mt. 5.48.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land.* It is most wise to plead the Lord's union of interest with ourselves, to lash our little boat, as it were, close to His great bark, and experience a sacred community in the tossings of the storm. It is *our* land that is devastated, but O Jehovah, it is also *Thy* land. *C. H. Spurgeon,* in *The Treasury of David.*

10. *Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.* What are the meanings of these words? Mercy is love that stoops, love that departs from the strict lines of desert and retribution. Mercy is love

that is kind when justice might make it otherwise. And truth blends with Mercy; that is to say—truth in a somewhat narrower than its widest sense, meaning mainly God's fidelity to every obligation under which He has come, God's faithfulness to promise, God's fidelity to His part, God's fidelity in His actions, to His own character, which is meant by that great word, "He sware by *Himself!*"

These two are the ideal two, which as far as God's will and wish are concerned, are the only two that would mark any of His dealings with men. When He is, if I may say so, left free to do as He would, and is not forced to His "strange act" of punishment by my sin and yours, these, and these only, are the characteristics of His dealings. Nor let us forget that the Psalmist's vision was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in whom these sweet twin characteristics, that are linked inseparably in all the works of God, are welded together into one in the living personality of Him who is all the Father's grace embodied; and is "the Way and the Truth and the Life."

In "Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other" we have the picture of what happens when Mercy and Truth that come down from heaven are accepted and recognized. In men's experience and life Righteousness and Peace cannot be rent apart. The only secret of tranquility is to be good. "The effect of righteousness shall be peace," as Isaiah, the brother in spirit of this Psalmist, says. The one secret of tranquility is first to trust in the Lord and then to do good. Righteousness and Peace kiss each other. *Alexander Maclaren* in *Psalms.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In a lecture to which a musical club was listening, the speaker quoted from the twenty-third Psalm, introducing his quotation with the words, "As the sweet singer of Israel tells us." A prominent member of the club looked puzzled for a moment, and then smilingly whispered to her neighbor, "He means Mendelssohn, of course."

David, the sweet singer of Israel, was the author of many but not of all

A Procession of Musicians, with followers clapping hands From an Assyrian Bas Relief

the Psalms. Dr. Lyman Abbott recalls a hymn-book which he used as a youth entitled "Watts and Select," Watts being the composer of the greater part of the selections, and says that the Book of Psalms might be called "David and Select," though the "select" includes the majority of the Psalms.

The Psalms are the great hymns which the people sang in their temple-worship, and some of our best-loved hymns are but variations of them. They are "the songs of the heart," the expressions of actual experiences, voicing humility and confession, thanksgiving and praise, fear and hope, anxieties and aspirations and triumph,—all the deep and bitter and sweet experiences of life.

The eighty-fifth Psalm befits well the early days after the return from Baby-

lon, when opposition prevented the rebuilding of the temple, and when discouragements were in danger of overwhelming the brave "remnant" that had returned to re-establish God's worship in the land to which He had shown so many favors in the past.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Do not use the wording of this Psalm in any way.

Study carefully Dr. McFadyen's beautiful paraphrase, p. 413, then write your own paraphrase in the words you must use for your pupils, and then study your writing till you know just what you will say in class. On your blackboard write the outline, p. 413, and use it as you develop the lesson. Begin with a quick review of the last two lessons, showing how God was good to His people. They were grateful. Tell your pupils about a seven-year-old friend of mine who received a great many presents at Christmas time and began bravely to write letters thanking the givers, but soon grew weary. So many letters yet to write! He gathered up all the gifts, and taking them to his mother said, "Here, please send these all back again and then I will not have to write any more letters!" Ask them if they ever saw a dog receive a nice morsel without looking his thanks though he could not say them. Tell them the story of the little four-year-old, p. 411. Teach that thanksgiving should be a part of their prayers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. An English lad named John Ruskin was very fond of flowers and trees, fields and woods, and sometimes he rebelled when his mother insisted upon his staying in doors to learn the Psalms. When he became a man he could see far more beauty in art and nature than most people can, and he devoted his life to teaching others to see beauty as he saw it. He became famous as a lecturer and writer not only in England but throughout the world, remarkable especially for his beautiful, poetical language. This beauty was due, Ruskin said, to his study of the Psalms, and he thanked his mother for insisting upon his committing them to memory as a boy.

The President of Haverford College, in our country, says: "When I was eight years old I was set to read the Psalms through, with the promise of a new pair of mittens—as strangely colored as Joseph's coat—when the task was done. I faithfully did it, and, what is more, it did me good. I really felt the power of this Hebrew poetry, and I soon got to know the Psalms so that at morning reading I used to call for my favorite ones when mother asked if any one had a 'selection.'"

Three years ago we committed to memory two psalms, the twenty-third and thirty-second. Who will recite the twenty-third Psalm? The thirty-second Psalm has much in common with our psalm for to-day. By what number is our lesson psalm known? In the thirty-second Psalm David speaks about the blessedness of forgiveness and of trust in God. Read the first verse. Read the second verse of the eighty-fifth Psalm. They are much alike, you see. What is the difference? The eighty-fifth Psalm speaks first of what God has done for His chosen people. They have returned from the captivity in Babylon, you know. What does the first verse say?

For Older Pupils. Dr. Green once told one of his classes at Princeton that for years he had been in the habit the first thing every day of reading from the Psalms, so as to nourish his life on the beauty and glory that is there. "Very many times since them," says Mr. Robert E. Speer, in the Master of the Heart, "I have come back to that suggestion of spending the first moments of the day over a page of the Psalms. They have this great advantage over other portions of the Bible, they are so easily detachable. We feel regarding many other parts of the Bible that we scarcely have any right to take to ourselves some isolated verse. In the Psalms we feel that every verse may be separated, that each throbs with some old moral experience of long years ago, breathing out in those old days struggles, conflicts, aspirations and desires that are akin to these that fill our own hearts now.

It was a surprise to me to think that when Mr. Gladstone rose to speak

in Parliament before presenting his great budgets, as he paused for just a moment before beginning, the thing that was sometimes in his mind was some verse from the Psalms, by which he was nerving himself toward the vision of great righteousness, and the fearless expression of what he saw as the truth. I think we lose a great deal, because we have not taken into our lives the living message of the Psalms."

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Lord hath done Great Things for Us

A Prayer for Our Nation. This eighty-fifth Psalm is called in the Revised Version a Prayer for God's Mercy upon the Nation. God's favor and mercy in the past are gratefully acknowledged, His pardon and help for the present are humbly sought, and His goodness and guidance in the future are joyously anticipated.

All the words of the psalm are applicable to our nation, for which God has done so great things. In all our past history God's hand is most clearly seen; in our present life as a nation we need most urgently His pardon and quickening power; and in our outlook upon the future we can count most surely upon His goodness and guidance, if only we "turn not again to folly."

"Lord, while for all mankind we pray,
Of every clime and coast,
Oh, hear us for our native land,
The land we love the most!

"Oh, guard our shore from every fo
With peace our borders bless,
Our cities with prosperity,
Our fields with plenteousness.

"Lord of the nations, thus to Thee
Our country we commend:
Be Thou her refuge and her trust,
Her everlasting friend."

God in England's History. Surely if ever a nation could trace God in its history, it is our own. Looking back to the earliest days, we see the mingling, as though by an invisible hand, of the elements—British, Anglo-Saxon, Norman—which were to unite and form the new people. And side by side with the formation of the people goes the instilling of Christian principle, by Augustine, Columba, Patrick. Scarcely has the new "English" tongue taken shape, when God inspires John Wycliff to translate the Bible into English. Then surely God was in the long struggle for liberty. Was it not God who kindled the sacred fire in the breast of our heroes and martyrs? And has not England known her great deliverances? But sometimes God has spoken to our people through sorrow and humiliation, till we learn how helpless we are without Him whom we so readily forget in the hour of prosperity. Condensed from article by *J. W. Ewing,* in *Sunday-School Chronicle.*

Giving God the Glory. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, sang the Psalmist of old, and down through the ages all the truly great ones of earth have voiced the same thought, that gratitude for all good results is due, not to God's co-workers here, but to God Himself. "My friends," said President Lincoln, "you owe me no gratitude for what I have done: and I, I may say, owe you no gratitude for what you have done; just as, in a sense, we owe no gratitude to the men who fought our battles for us. I trust that this has been for us all a work of duty. All the gratitude is due to the great Giver of all good."

Many years passed while Dr. Jenner was perfecting his theory of vaccination as a remedy for small-pox, and during all his reflections over the joy in prospect of being the instrument destined to take away from the world one of its greatest scourges, he always ended, he said, in devout acknowledgment to one Being from whom this and all other blessings flow. "What hath God wrought!" These words of Morse in the first telegram ever sent over the wires should often be in our thoughts.

Thanks be to God.

Roaming in the meadow,
Little four-year-old
Picks the starry daisies
With their hearts of gold;
Fills her snowy apron,
Fills her dimpled hands,
Suddenly how quiet
In the grass she stands.

"Who made flowers so pretty,
Who put them here, did God?"
I, half heeding, answer
With a careless nod.
Dropping all her blossoms
With uplifted head,
Fervent face turned skyward,
"Thank you, God."—she said.

Unidentified.

II Natural and Spiritual Forces

Truth springeth out of the Earth and Righteousness hath looked down from Heaven. How these two words, earth and heaven, represent the two great divisions of the thought of man! When you look abroad over a wide, open country, there are two parts of what you see; one, the green earth and its bright fields and sombre forests, and rivers and lakes, with its trees and houses, fences and barns, and all the clear signs of man's activity; and the other, the blue sky, the birthplace of the winds, the home of sunlight and of stars, as mysterious and far away as the first one is close by and familiar. And as the horizon at once separates these two and joins them to each other, and he who watches stands between the two, between the heavens and the earth, and feels his one world made of the two together; so all man's thinking goes on between the natural and supernatural, between the simple, definite, familiar operations of practical life, the buying and the selling, the building and delving and contriving, the social relationships and governmental operations, which make the movement of the earth: and, on the other hand, the vague, unaccountable, transcendental influences which come out of the realm of unseen things, the regions where supernal beings live, the home to which the dead have gone, the House where God is as He is not here, the whole great universe which comes not to the knowledge of the eye or ear, but in which man believes by the subtler witness which it bears of itself directly to the soul.

And now the promise is that these two worlds are some day to come to perfect harmony and co-operation, and to conspire to influence the life of man.

Think what the promise that it gives us is. Think also what the limitations of that promise are. It says to every man who, trying to do right, has summoned to his aid all the best influences which this earthly life can furnish, and who has learned by sad experience to fear that they are not sufficient, that there are other influences which are trying to help him coming out of higher regions than this earth "The heavens are helping you," it says. "The world of spirits is your ally. The unseen universe is on your side. In ways you cannot guess, with an intimacy of approach which you can never know, righteousness is looking down from heaven on your endeavor to be a righteous man." That is a splendid assurance. But see how very definite it is. It is all moral. It promises nothing but righteousness out of heaven.

Now, when I think how men have dealt with their belief in the unseen world, I am struck by the thought that what they have mostly asked of that world has been something else than righteousness, and therefore does not fall within the lines of this great promise. Think of it! The old astrologers questioned the stars to know their fates. They waited and listened night after night to hear some message out of the sky, to tell them where they were to seek their fortunes, how long they were to live, and when they were to die. The modern Spiritualist tries to peer through the veil which separates the living from the dead, and what he mainly promises himself is consolation, some mitigation of the awful loneliness which fills his empty house. The Christian Scientist thinks he feels the whole air thrilling with power from the depths of the unseen, and it seems to be to him almost entirely the power of physical healing; he is to have his sickness cured. The great ghost-haunted world has rung with inquiries for the satisfaction of its curiosity, but certainly not with cravings for a purer life and a more steadfast strength against temptation. Wealth, comfort, health, knowledge, these are all good things, no doubt. If the un-

seen world can give them to us it is right that we should take them. But they are not the greatest things. Not one of them is absolutely necessary. Righteousness, goodness, strength of character, those are the only things which a true man must have, things which he cannot live without. And so I cannot help believing that a large part of man's questioning of the unseen world has been futile because he has not questioned it for the one thing which it was eager to bestow. He has asked it to make him rich, to give him consolation, to cure his sickness, and not above and before all other things to give him righteousness. Condensed from *Natural and Spiritual Forces,* by *Phillips Brooks.*

III Missionary Topic Quicken Us

Two Lessons from Korea and Manchuria. In Korea a year or two ago a woman came to a missionary and said she wanted to be a Christian, and then she explained the kind of Christian she wished to be: "The reason I have come is that I have a daughter who is a Christian, and she is always begging me to be one. So I have decided that I will. But I don't want to be any better Christian than is really necessary. I would like just to be a good enough Christian to get into heaven."

This Korean woman was simply more naïve, more truthful than people in western lands. We don't hear such remarks made, but "actions speak louder than words," and they show that there is a wonderfully large number of would-be no-better-than-is-really-necessary Christians among us.

In a prayer meeting held in Panchiapu, Manchuria, a native offered this prayer: "O Lord, don't leave out Panchiapu in the revival that is spreading over the land. There's nothing really wrong with Panchiapu, only we are just deadly cold." Are there not many such places the world over where there is nothing really wrong with the Christians save that they are just deadly cold? And what a death-dealing power lurks in this cold indifference! One feels inclined to speak as did that gruff physician to a patient who said there was nothing really the matter with him only he had taken a severe cold. The doctor's remark was: "Zounds, sir, what would you have—the plague?"

God did not leave out Panchiapu. He quickened it till it glowed with zeal for His cause. Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. If we are deadly cold, let us pray for God's quickening power.

Christians of Burning Hearts. In southern China, some years ago, in the city on the borders of the province of Hunan I talked with a young Chinese Christian man. He was a graduate of a college in the far north. He had come a thousand miles away from home to preach Christ among his own countrymen. He was one of the most intelligent Chinese Christians whom I had met. And I was asking him many questions regarding the nation, and especially regarding the life and spirit of the Chinese Christians. And when I was through he said: "Mr. Speer, you have asked me a great many questions, and some of them have been very difficult. You have asked me about the Christians in China. Now, I would like to ask you one question. You know what the Christians in your country are like. Are they all men and women of burning hearts?" It was a quaint Chinese idiom of which he made use, but that was its literal translation. He desired to know if we were all of us of burning hearts. What would you have said to him? What would you have said to him about yourself? What would you have said to him about the great mass of our so-called Christians? *Robert E. Speer,* in *The Master of the Heart.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

What we need is a profound faith in God's ruling all things. *Gordon.*
God covers sin, but man must not cover sin before God. *Perowne.*
Thankfulness is the other side of mercy. *Henry van Dyke.*
Quicken Thou us, and we will call upon Thy name. Ps. 80.18.
No human council hath devised nor hath any human mind worked out these great things: they are the gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while

dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. *Lincoln.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

"We beseech Thee to give us that due sense of all Thy mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful."

The returned exiles were not content with their relationship to God. They knew that they were guilty of sins of omission and begged for divine mercy and pardon, and they knew also that they were guilty of sins of commission and asked to be quickened, revived. Both prayers we need to offer.

Let us include in our prayers this week these petitions: that the spirit of penitence may be ours; that the name of Jesus, in whom mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, are embodied, may be honored in our home; that God's will may be done in our community; that righteousness and peace may reign in our land.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. God's Mercy in the Past, 1-3. II. A Prayer for the Present, 4-7. III. Hope for the Future, 8-13.

Once, O our God, Thou didst show favor to our land, by stilling Thine anger against us, graciously forgiving our sins, and bringing Thy people back from exile. Once again give over Thine anger, and restore us; or, wilt Thou cherish Thy wrath against us forever? O, wilt Thou not bring Thy people back again from the gates of death, and make them glad in Thee? Show us Thy mercy, O our God, and save us!

I tremble with expectancy to hear what answer the mighty Jehovah will make to my prayer. (Pause.) Now I know that it will be an answer of peace—peace to His loyal people that turn their hearts to Him. Yes, assuredly, He will soon save those who fear Him, and honor the land by His glorious presence. In the golden days so soon to dawn, men will be kind and loyal to each other, while from heaven salvation will look down upon them. Yes, faithfulness will spring up among men like golden harvest, and salvation will look down upon the happy earth from the windows of heaven. Jehovah will send His blessing, and His land will yield her harvest. He will pass through the land, attended by peace and salvation—salvation going as herald before Him, and peace following in the track of His steps. *John Edgar McFadyen,* in *The Messages of the Psalmists.*

SUBJECT FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

The Psalter.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the whole Book of Esther. 2. What was Esther's relationship to Mordecai? (Esther 2.15.) 3. Who is the villain of the story? 4. Why did Haman hate Mordecai? 5. What was Haman's plan for revenge? 6. How was his plot frustrated? 7. What feast was held to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews? 9. What can you learn about Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther? (See Persia in the Story of the Nations Series; clipping, p. 417.)

Questions to think about. 1. What word expresses "think with thyself"? (Imagine.) 2. What does "holdest thy peace" mean? 3. What must Mordecai have had in mind when he said "Then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place"? 4. Why did Mordecai advise Esther not to let it be known that she was a Jewess? 5. What later king made a promise like that of Ahasuerus? (Luke 6.23.) 6. What is the religious teaching of the Book of Esther? 7. What good traits do you see in Esther? 8. What is a good definition of duty? 9. What is a good definition of privilege? 10. Are some of your duties privileges? 11. Can you regard all your duties as privileges?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 5

ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE

Golden Text

The Lord preserveth all them that love him. Ps. 145.20.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Esth. 1.1-2.23. Esther Chosen Queen. **T.** Esth. 3.1-5. Haman's Plot to Destroy the Jews. **W.** Esth. 4.1-17. Esther's Noble Resolve. **T.** Esth. 5.1-6.14. The Banquet for the King and Haman. **F.** Esth. 7.1-10. Haman Hanged on his own Gallows. **S.** Esth. 8.1-17. The Saving of the Jews. **S.** Esth. 9.1-10.3. The Commemorating Feast. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Esther 4.1-5.3 PRINT 4.10-5.3 COMMIT 4.13, 14

10 Then Esther spake unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai, *saying*: 11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except those to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. 12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

13 Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. 14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? 15 Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. 17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the entrance of the house. 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. 3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

10. *Then.* Read Esther 1.1-4.9.—*Esther, the queen.* Her Jewish name was Hadassah, Myrtle, Esth. 2.7. "Esther is the Assyrian Istar, the Assyro-Babylonian form of the name of the goddess Ashtoreth, who, like the classical Venus, symbolized youth and beauty; the name had evidently been given her as a nick-name by her heathen neighbors because she was fair and beautiful" (*Sayce*).—*Hathach.* The king's chamberlain appointed to attend the queen, verse 5.—*Mordecai.* The cousin and guardian of Esther, Esth. 2.7,15.

11. *The king.* Ahasuerus, or Xerxes as he is better known, the king of Persia. "Ahasuerus or Akhashverosh is the Hebrew form of the Persian Khshayarsha, called Xerxes in Greek" (*Sayce*).—*The inner court.* See p. 416. —*There is one law for him.* The law for whoever entered uncalled was in-

variably the same.—*The golden sceptre.* The king's long rod, the symbol of power. "Xenophon says that three hundred sceptre-bearers attended the elder Cyrus" (*Davies*). In the Tower of London there is a collection of sceptres; one is of gold, another has a dove upon the end.

12. *They.* Hathach and others with him.

13. *Think not with thyself.* Do not imagine.—*That thou shalt escape more than all the Jews.* Mordecai tells her that she fears the danger of going to the king, but she may equally fear the danger of not going.

14. *Holdest thy peace.* Keep silent.—*Then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.* God will deliver them. The fact that God is never mentioned in the Book of Esther is often commented on: here Mordecai is evidently thinking of the oft-repeated assurance that Israel shall not perish. *Who knoweth...this.* You are evidently the agent through whom God would work.

16. *All the Jews in Shushan.* Their number may be inferred to be large from the number of men they slew, when authorized to resist their enemies, 9.15.—*Fast.* As the Jews were wont to do in the time of peril, thus humbling themselves before God, and seeking His help. Fasting was accompanied by prayer: Ezra 8.23; Neh. 1.4.—*Three days.* Until the third day after this message was sent.—*My maidens.* See 2.9.—*Will fast in like manner.* "Although the maidens must have been heathen, yet Esther values the help of their fasting; and they are loyal enough to her to be willing to undertake it" (*Paton*).—*So.* In the way which is not according to the law, *i. e.* without being called by the king.—*If I perish, I perish.* Whether this is an expression of perfect submission to the providence of God or of despairing resignation to the inevitable, is a question.

17. *Mordecai went his way.* He had been waiting before the king's gate, verse 6.

5.1. *On the third day.* The fast had lasted perhaps forty hours or more, from the afternoon of the day of the messages between Esther and Mordecai till the morning of the third day.—*The royal house.* The Throne-Hall.—*The entrance of the house.* The doorway leading to the inner court, through which the king could look and see Esther waiting.

3. *Even to the half of the kingdom.* Hyperbole was and still is common in the East. Compare Herod's promise to Herodias (Luke 6.23). Read the remainder of the Book of Esther.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

9. *Esther...Mordecai.* Patriotism is more evident than religion in the Book of Esther. To turn to it after the fervors of prophets and the continual recognition of God in history which marks the other historical books, is like coming down from heaven to earth, as Ewald says. But that difference in tone probably accurately represents the difference between the saints and heroes of an earlier age and the Jews in Persia, in whom national feeling was stronger than devotion. The picture of their characteristics deducible from this book shows many of the traits which have marked them ever since—accommodating flexibility, strangely united with unbounding tenacity; a capacity for securing the favor of influential people, and willingness to stretch conscience in securing it; reticence and diplomacy; and, beneath all, unquenchable devotion to Israel, which burns alike in the politic Mordecai and the lovely Esther. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *Expositions of Scripture.*

14. *Then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.* You see a purple cloud resting in royal glory against the sunset shining in the midst of a vast expanse of golden sheen. Do you say: "I cannot see the sun behind that cloud; therefore I am sure the sun is not behind it"? Do you not rather say: "I am sure he is there, for I see his light on every side, and even the purple splendors of the cloud itself are the witnesses of his transforming beams"? So with the Book of Esther. God is not mentioned in the book, but everywhere around it the divine shines forth. *C. A. Dickinson.*

5.2. *Esther the queen.* Critics ask what room there can be for either Vashti or Esther, since Xerxes had but one wife, Amestris, to whom he was married before the third year of his reign, and who continued to be his wife until the

end of it. The answer is simple. Amestris, it is true, was his only legitimate wife, but, like his predecessors and successors, he must have had others as well who were illegitimate. Of those we know nothing from Greek sources; from the Book of Esther we know of two. *A. H. Sayce,* in *Esther.*

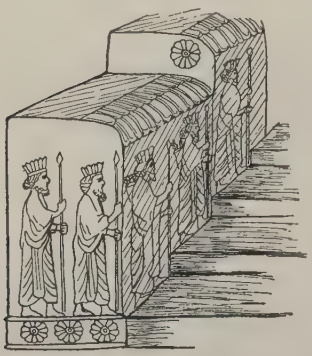
LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

11. *There is one law for him that he be put to death.* That Ahasuerus (Xerxes) would not hesitate to carry out such a law is shown by his having had all the engineers beheaded (and the sea scourged) when a storm wrecked the bridge of boats which they had built across the Hellespont over which he would march his troops in his campaign against Greece; and by his having the eldest son of his friend Pythias killed and his body cut in two that the army might pass between the two parts, because he was enraged by the father's request that this son might remain at home; that father who had already given five sons to the army! Though weak and cowardly, Xerxes was a capricious and cruel despot.

52. *So Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre.* An illustration drawn from the custom that now prevails in connection with an audience with the Pope of Rome is not exactly one "from Oriental Life," but it is interesting here. When one wishes such an audience, he is asked by the master of ceremonies if he understands "the etiquette of the occasion," meaning by this that "the women must go veiled and the whole company must kneel when the Pope enters his audience-chamber, and if he is gracious enough to present his signet they must kiss it."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We have seen how God had done great things for His people who returned to Jerusalem from the exile: now we are shown how He cared for those who remained in the land of the Captivity, and we learn that He cares for all that love Him (Golden Text), wherever and whoever they may be.



Stairway of Xerxes' Palace

Zerubbabel's temple, the second one at Jerusalem, was completed in 515 B. C. in the reign of Darius king of Persia. Thirty years later Xerxes, the son of Darius, ascended the throne. He reigned for twenty years (B. C. 485-465) over an empire that extended from India to Ethiopia, and included 12 satrapies or provinces. Xerxes is famous in history for his invasion of Greece. See p. 417. It was this king, it is believed, who is called Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther.

To understand our lesson the whole book must be carefully read. See the account of Esther p. 25 of the Introduction, for the historical background.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The scene of our lesson is in Shushan, or Susa. See p. 53. The French explorers who have been engaged for several years in excavating the mounds of Susa are constantly bringing fresh light to bear upon the Bible records. "Shushan the palace," where Esther met Ahasuerus, has been uncovered. Professor Price, in the Monuments of the Old Testament, quotes M. Dieulafoy's description of the palace. It was composed of three groups of distinct apartments, each surrounded by a special enclosure, but comprised in the same fortress. The Apadana, or throne-hall, resembled a Greek temple. The king occupied in the temple the place of the divine statue. The hall covered more than twenty acres. Quite separate from the Apadana, grouping themselves about an interior court, were the special apartments of the sovereign: the

audience hall, the rest-chamber, rooms similar to a chancery, and to an armory, for the guards, and for the king's subsidiaries. The private dwelling of the king, recognized by its arrangements and isolation, and by the formidable turret which protected it, occupied the southeast angle of the acropolis.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

The climax of the lesson is the heroism of the queen who risked her life to save her people. In telling the lesson story, which is the whole ten chapters of the Book of Esther, you will need to omit all the details which are unnecessary for the interest of the story. It is so long that you will find it helpful to write it out, in the interesting way that you will present it, and then master your writing. However young your pupils are, they can appreciate the bravery of the queen. Teach the thought of Miss Hershey's article, p. 421.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Recall the expeditions to Greece made by Darius, King of Persia, which ended so badly for him. The great king was getting a third expedition ready when he died. His son Xerxes would have preferred not to continue the struggle, but he was a weak and vain king, who yielded to the urging of his courtiers. Eight years were spent in gathering the greatest army the world had ever seen, equipping the men with arms and provisions, and building roads over which they could travel. There were over two million fighting men and with them went so many slaves and servants that some historians say there were ten millions in all. Imagine this vast host marching across Asia Minor in several divisions and meeting at the Hellespont. Here two bridges had been built, but before the army could cross a storm came up and destroyed them. The angry king ordered the men who planned the bridges put to death, and then he had the waves lashed with whips, and chains thrown across the strait in token that he intended to become the master of the rebellious sea! Other bridges were built, and before the army crossed Xerxes reviewed them from a neighboring height. "See that mighty host spread out as far as eye can reach!" he exclaimed. "I weep at the thought that a hundred years hence there will be nothing left of it except, perhaps, a handful of dust and a few moldering bones!"

Seven days and nights it took for the mighty host to cross the bridge. There were "the sacred chariot drawn by eight white horses, the glittering array of the Immortals (the king's body-guard of picked soldiers, who were called the Immortals because they had never suffered defeat), the burnished helmets and arms of the foot-soldiers, the silken canopies and tents over the grandees, and countless chariots drawn by four horses, and provided on either side with sharp scythes, which were intended to mow down the enemy like ripe grain." In the baggage wagons, of which there were so many that it took a whole month to get them all over, there were costly hangings for the officers' tents, soft couches, even dishes of solid gold.

In Thessaly between the mountains and the sea there is a narrow pass through which Xerxes and his army had to go in order to enter Greece. It was called Thermopylæ, a Greek word that means "Hot Gateway," because of the warm springs there. This pass Xerxes found guarded by a few men under the leadership of Leonidas, a Spartan king, and he sent them word to surrender their arms. Great was his surprise when the brave Greeks answered, "Come and take them!" and still greater was his surprise when he found that with all his mighty host he could not do this! His soldiers, even his Immortals, retreated before the little handful of brave Greeks. If a Greek shepherd had not turned traitor to his country and shown Xerxes a way over the mountains, he would have had to return at once to Persia. The Persians marched on to Athens and burned the city, which had been deserted by the Athenians. Then Xerxes had a throne built upon a mountain and sat there in state to watch the naval battle between his fleet and that of the Greeks. To his great surprise the Greeks were victorious in this battle of Salamis. The discouraged king returned to Persia, leaving his general to conquer Greece. Two more naval battles were fought, at Platæa and at Mycale, in which the

Greeks were victorious as before, and it was a very small Persian army that escaped, leaving behind their slaves and all their baggage.

All this story you will read when you study Grecian history. In the Bible there is a short book which gives glimpses of the life of Xerxes after his return to his capital city of Shushan, Persia, and about his dealings with the Jews who lived there. The book is named for the heroine. What was her name? Who was she? In this book what is the name of the king of Persia? Ahasuerus is another name for Xerxes, the king who failed to conquer Greece.

For Older Pupils. A most joyous occasion for the modern Jew is the Feast of Purim, which they celebrate on the fourteenth of Adar, the last month of the Jewish year, which corresponds to February-March. At this feast presents are given to one another as we give them at Christmas time, and all kinds of merriment are enjoyed. The day before is a fast day, the "Fast of Esther," when the Jewish women are very busy preparing choice dishes and cakes for the feast, among them one that has the name of Haman. The poor are remembered with money, and contributions are given for the Halukah, the "Box for Palestine." In the evening of the Fast-Day a service is held in the synagogues, the one occasion at which the women and children are admitted with the men into the congregation. The *Sunday-School Journal* quotes this account of the service from the Jewish *Monthly Intelligencer:* "After the usual service the minister offers three benedictions. The first for the command to read the Megilah (the parchment containing the Book of Esther), the second for the miraculous intervention which God manifested in those days to their fathers, the third for the preservation of the Jews to the present time. Then the Megilah is unrolled and spread out as a letter and read before the people in an intoning voice, different from that in which the law and the prophets are read. When the reader utters the word "Haman," the people all call out "Yimach Shemo" (Let his name be blotted out, or The name of the wicked shall rot), or "Arur Haman" (Cursed be Haman), and then they repeat this curse, naming the wife of Haman (Zeres) and his ten sons. At this time they beat on the benches or book boards in front of them, or stamp with their feet. But when the name of Mordecai or Esther is uttered, they shout "Barak Mordecai, barak Esther" (Blessed be Mordecai, blessed be Esther), Berakim Kol Israel" (Blessed be all Israel!).

It was a great deliverance, that of the Jews in Shushan from the death planned by Haman, and Mordecai and Esther instituted the great Feast of Purim to celebrate it. They called these days Purim, after the name of Pur, because Haman had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to determine which day would be the most favorable for carrying out his purpose of destroying the Jews (Esther 3.7; 9.24, 26). Who was Haman, and why did he plan to destroy the Jews?

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Duty is Privilege

Learn to see the Privilege in the Duty. Duty has been defined as something unpleasant which the other fellow ought to do. Our lesson gives us an exactly opposite definition: Duty is something which we cannot afford to let the other fellow do. If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, Mordecai warned Esther, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish. The opportunity of carrying out the duty was Esther's; she might fail to seize it, and it would fall to another. The duty was a privilege which she could grasp or let go. Thus it has always been with God's workers. We think such and such people indispensable to the progress of His kingdom, but if they fall out by the way others are called to take their places. God is not dependent on any one to further His designs. By refusing to do his part no one blocks the plans of God: he only loses for himself the blessing of sharing in the work. Duty is not a burden which we would gladly shift to other shoulders; it is a privilege that we cannot afford to pass on.

But is it true that duty is something unpleasant? It is often, possibly usually, regarded as something irksome if not positively unpleasant, a task if not a

Courtesy of the Soule Art Publishing Company

ESTHER

From the painting by Bierman

terror. We may rejoice when the duty is accomplished, for

"There's no pleasure, sport or fun
Like the joy of duty done,"

but we may also rejoice in the doing of the duty if we but regard it in the right light. "You will be happy by and by if you will take the time to learn to know a privilege when you see it," some one has said. "Far too often when we meet a privilege on the way of life we do not recognize it. We say: 'Excuse me. I believe you are a duty—a hard, irksome duty. Stand out of the way. I am looking for privilege, not duty.' And all the time we were face to face with privilege and did not know it."

A Dream. The king slept and dreamed. He thought one stood at the threshold of his chamber who was more beautiful than even Ceres herself. The girl seemed frightened until she saw the king, to whom she knelt and stretched forth her hands, asking where she was and what were these strange scenes to which she had come. And when the king understood that she had come as a visitor from another world, he gladly became her guide and showed her his palace and his gardens, and led her through the streets into the marketplace and the forum, and showed her those places in which he had a special pride, and those persons in the city whom he held dear. But as they went, lo! the girl's sense of strangeness did not wear off, nor did her fear lessen. Her face rather gathered pain and anxiety. Then the king led her into the fields and showed her the sower going forth to sow; he showed her a husbandman pruning and digging about his vines; he showed her a scholar copying a roll and with loving care decorating the margins with blue and gold; he led her to the house of his friend, where was a child in its cradle; he took her to the house of his favorite officer, who chanced to be gazing silently at his sword, knowing full well that perchance on the morrow he would fall on the field of battle. When the king's heart was ready to burst with pride, he said, "All these treasures are mine." But so far from answering him with congratulations upon his good fortune the beautiful stranger burst into tears, saying, "I did not realize that yours was a world in which every heart must break daily." Then the king was troubled for her, and he said: "You do not understand. That which you weep for is the very reason for our rejoicing. You pity the sower for carrying his sack, but he rejoices forecasting the harvest. You mourn for the scholar with lamp burning till the morning, but those pages are his glory; your tears fall for the mother whose love neither slumbers nor sleeps, but this mother, whose heart hangs over the cradled babe as a star hangs over the earth, finds in solicitude her greatest joy. You shudder at the scar on my soldier's brow, but he counts it his medal of honor, and the battle scene over which you weep hangs on the walls of his memory like the shield of a vanquished enemy. Strange that you weep at those things over which we sing." *Newell Dwight Hillis,* in *The Quest of Happiness.*

II For What Have You Come

Esther's Mission. Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Mordecai questioned Esther. That Esther, a Jewess, held a position of power and influence in the court of the king of Persia at the time when the Jews so much needed a friend at court seemed to Mordecai providential. His question gave to Esther's life a higher meaning than she had probably ever given it; she realized that she, and she alone, was the woman for the hour, that in her hands lay the fate of her kindred. She was great enough to do that for which she had come to the kingdom.

Turn into your Life the Light of a Noble Purpose. You may have been present in a concert or assembly room before the lights are turned on, and have seen the sudden leap of the dingy, dull building and its shadowy audience into brilliancy and warmth and a happy, smiling company, when by the pressure of a knob the electric current entered the room. Just such a change takes place in every human life when some great purpose comes into it.

When the Civil War broke out young lads, North and South, forgot their plays in their interest in national affairs. The theatres were almost deserted

in our great cities. Girls ceased to trifle over the fashions. The electric current of a great thought had flashed into their lives, and made them men and women. You can, each of you, apply this fact to yourselves. If your days are filled up now with petty pursuits, and your mind turns to mean or vicious thoughts, don't stop to fight these temptations one by one. Turn into your life and thoughts the fire of a noble work, a high purpose. The paltry vices which have possessed you will vanish before it like Milton's crew at the coming of Ithuriel. *Youth's Companion.*

III Lion-hearted Women

The Heroine. Esther was a young woman whose remarkable beauty had attracted the favor of Hegai, who was on the lookout for a queen to take the place of Vashti in the Persian court. For a year he kept her in training for that position, giving her "six months with oil of myrrh and six months with sweet odors." Such training might increase her attractions, but it might also increase her vanity and love of ease, her selfishness and spiritlessness. Yet events proved that she was made of sterner stuff; not only did she show a nature wise and capable, but prudent and discreet, courageous and firm, patriotic and self-sacrificing.

Mordecai warned Esther that if she did not take her life in her hands and risk the king's anger by going to him uncalled, she need not imagine that she could escape the death that was to be meted out to all the Jews, even though she dwelt in the king's house. All the credit of courage and self-sacrifice may be taken from her by assuming that she believed she must perish if she did not go, while there was a chance for herself as well as the rest if she did brave the lion in his den. True, Mordecai so warned her, yet it was not known that she was a Jewess; this fact is repeatedly stated in the book, and she could confidently count on escape from the general massacre, while the king's easily aroused anger and his cruelty were well known; was he not very wroth and did not his anger so burn in him that when Vashti had failed to obey the summons to attend his feast he deposed her? It was a cruel choice presented to Esther, and she chose the better part.

Suppose Esther had shrunk from the trial, the editor of the *Christian World Pulpit* suggests. Suppose she had argued with herself: "I am only a woman; I am tender and timid. Courage is for men, not for women. Why should I be expected to risk my position, to risk my life, for the sake of my people? If they are to perish, they must perish, and the blame cannot reasonably fall on me." She might so have argued, and her people might have been wiped out in a ruthless massacre, and none need ever have known that Esther had a chance to save them, but in order to save herself had hung back. Would she have had a moment's peace again in life? Would the splendor of her queenship, and all the extravagant luxury with which her royal husband surrounded her, the golden cage he had provided for a petted jeweled bird, have enabled her to escape the haunting horror of the phantoms of the victims she might have saved? We may lose our life by saving it, when we save it by declining the clear call of duty.

Esthers are needed. If Esther, in the dim light of her time, amid the demoralizing surroundings of the palace of a sensual king, could say, "If I perish, I perish!" when the saving of her race in captivity was concerned, what ought not the women of to-day, who live in a Christian land, in the light of Him who was the Friend and the Uplifter of women, to dare to do for Him? The example of Esther is well worth studying by the women of our churches who live comfortable, sheltered lives, who are dainty, refined, fastidious, and who avert their gaze from the sight and turn from the thought of things distasteful in the social order, shrinking away from men, women, and children, the sight and the knowledge of whom might haunt them and spoil their pleasure in their luxury. Esthers are needed who will be prepared to say: "It shall be my mission to save the fallen, the drunkards, the victims of the sweat-shop and the slums. I will bring into their lives the light and the love that have come to me, and will lift them up by the power which my favored position gives me." *Editor of Christian World Pulpit.*

Heroism for Girls. "Put yourself in his place" is a motto for the hero

in training. It will steel the nerve and steady the hand at the critical moment. The girl who will teach herself courage need not go to any special school of heroism; she must simply instruct herself in obedience and unselfishness.

There are classes in these two subjects in every farmhouse and village store and factory and library in the land. Every time the daughter of the house gets up early in the morning, in spite of the lazy wish for a little more sleep, she takes a lesson in her chosen subject.

An afternoon spent in listening to the woes of a dull, deaf neighbor or in soothing a fretful child helps form the habit which may issue in a glorious deed. The persistent study of difficult shorthand may toughen the moral fibre so that by and by it can withstand the strain of temptation.

All is grist that comes to the mill of character, and heroism is compounded only of character and opportunity. Occasion may seem to be accidental. Whether or not a certain girl is at a certain corner at a certain moment may determine whether she can save a baby from death under the wheels of an automobile; but a hundred chances may come to her in vain if she is not fitted to snatch them. Condensed from an article in the *Youth's Companion* by *Heloise E. Hershey.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

"Fine apparel oft covers an aching heart."

Dodging duty does not draw us away from danger.

It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibility of not doing it. *J. R. Miller.*

Life without a mission is life with a tremendous omission. *H. C. Trumbull.*

Many of our cares are but a morbid way of looking at our privileges. *Scott.*

Heroism is the soul's high privilege, and the ranks of those who wear it nobly are always larger than we know. *Youth's Companion.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Mordecai had charged Esther not to make known her people nor her kindred at court. Mordecai knew that it would be better for her not to be known as a Jewess. A Jewish rabbi in a recent sermon told his congregation that they were living in an age when it is so hard a thing to be a Jew. Are you doing anything to make it hard?

Are you willing to pay the price for heroism? Are you now in training?

It is a glorious thought that each one of us is come to the kingdom for such a time as this, to do some work for the King.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

Our lesson proper, the entire book of Esther, is briefly given on p. 420.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Book of Esther. 2. Modern prejudice against the Jews.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the entire chapter. 2. What was the relationship of Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar? (Clipping, p. 426.) 3. What had Nebuchadnezzar done for Daniel? (Lesson XI, Third Quarter.) 4. For what was Daniel especially noted in the Persian realm? 5. How had he proved to Nebuchadnezzar his ability? 6. Read Jeremiah's account of the carrying away from Jerusalem of the vessels of the temple (Jer. 52.12-19).

Questions to think about. 1. What is the meaning of "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways," verse 23? 2. Of what sins was Belshazzar guilty? 3. What is the temperance teaching of the lesson?

Note-Book and Memory Work. Commit to memory Kipling's Recessional. In your book write briefly the Story of Esther.

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 12

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST AND FATE
(World's Temperance Lesson)

Golden Text

God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Eccl. 12.14.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Dan. 5.1-31. Belshazzar's Feast and Fate. **T.** Esth. 1.1-22. Ahasuerus' Great Feast and his Folly. **W.** 1 Kings 16.8-14. Conspiring against a Drunken King. **T.** 1 Kings 20.1-21. Losing a Battle through Drunkenness. **F.** Isa. 5.8-12. Feasting till Inflamed by Wine. **S.** 1 Sam. 25.1-38. Nabal's Feasting and Drunkenness. **S.** 1 Thess. 5.1-22. The Lord's Day Cometh as a Thief in the Night. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Dan. 5 PRINT vv. 17-30 COMMIT vv. 25-28

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: 19 and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, 23 but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.

25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. 27 TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

17. *Then.* Read verses 1-16.—*The king.* Belshazzar, verse 1. See the Historical Background.—*Thy gifts.* Verse 16.—*Be to thyself.* Daniel had accepted gifts from Nebuchadnezzar, 2.48.—*The writing.* Verse 5.

18. *The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom and greatness.* See Jer. 25.9; 27.5-11.—*Thy father.* The term is here used in the sense of *thy predecessor.* See the Historical Background.

19. *Whom he would he slew.* Dan. 2.12,13; 3.6; 11.3,16,36.—*Raised up.* Exalted.

20. *His heart was lifted up.* He became proud. Dan. 4.30,31.—*His spirit was hardened.* Compare Pharaoh's hardening of heart. Ex. 9.

21. See 4.28-37. "His penalty was nothing absolutely abnormal. His illness is well known to science as that form of hypochondriasis (madness) in which a man takes himself for a wolf (lycanthropy), or a dog, (kynanthropy), or some other animal. Probably the fifth century monks, who were known as the 'Boskoi' from feeding on grass, may have been, in many cases, half maniacs who in time took themselves for oxen" (*Farrar*).

22. *Though thou knewest all this.* Knewest how great Nebuchadnezzar was humbled.

23. *They have brought.* See Dan. 5.2-4; 2 K. 24.10-16.—*The vessels of his house.* Of the temple.—*And hast drunk wine from them.* The First Book of Maccabees relates the following concerning Antiochus Epiphanes: "He entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, and the table of showbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials, and the censers of gold...He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels." The Jews in the time of Antiochus doubtless hoped that his sacrilege would be similarly punished. "To those who are convinced that the Book of Daniel is the work of some holy and highly gifted 'Chasid' in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, it becomes clear that the story of Belshazzar is really suggested by the profanity of Antiochus Epiphanes in carrying off, and doubtless subjecting to profane usage, many of the sacred vessels of the temple" (*Farrar*). See the Introduction, p. 26.—*Which see not, nor hear, nor know.* Dt. 4.28, Ps. 115.5, 6.—*In whose hand thy breath is.* Who created thee (Gen. 2.7; Job 12.10).—*Ways.* Destinies. O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jer. 10.23).

24. *Then.* Therefore.—*The part of the hand.* Verse 5. Whether the fingers of a man's hand appeared miraculously, or Belshazzar saw them in a vision, the book does not state. See Mrs. Gibson's suggestion in regard to the writing, p. 224, and Light from Oriental Life.

25. *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.* That is, *Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divisions,* RVm. "They are really the names of three weights: a mina, a shekel, and half-shekels. The puzzle consisted partly in the character or manner in which they were supposed to have been written—an unfamiliar form of the Aramaic character, for instance, or, as the mediæval Jews suggested, a vertical instead of a horizontal arrangement of the letters; partly in the difficulty of attaching any meaning to them even when they were read; what could the names of three weights signify? Here Daniel's skill in 'declaring riddles' (verse 12) comes in" (*Driver*). See the next verses; also Dr. Clay's words, p. 425.

1. Fifteen Minas 2. Three Shekels 3. One Mina

26. *Mene.* "Mene means 'numbered' as well as 'a mina'" (*Driver*).

27. *Tekel.* "Tekel suggests tekil, weighed" (*Driver*).

28. *Peres.* That is, *divided,* RVm. "The U in *Upharsin* stands for *and,* and *P(h)arsin* is the plural of *Peres*" (*Dummelow*) "*Parsin,* or *peres,* a half-shekel, points allusively to a double interpretation: Thy kingdom is divided, *peris,* and given to the Medes and Persians, Aramaic *paras*" (*Driver*).

29. *Then commanded Belshazzar.* His fulfilling his promise, verse 16, in the face of immediate danger to his realm, is remarkable.—*Purple.* Scarlet, verses 7,16.—*The third ruler in the kingdom.* See Joseph's reward for interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41.39-44).

30. *Chaldean.* Babylonian.—*Was slain.* See the Historical Background.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

22. *Though thou knewest all this.* You must not think that this was the only warning that Belshazzar had received. If it came too late, that was because it was the warning of retribution, not the warning of mercy; it was only because all previous warnings had been neglected and despised. Nebuchadnezzar's dreams of the shattered colossus and the felled tree; the brute madness which had afflicted him; the besieging of his own city; the fact that the shouts of an enemy might have mingled with the very songs of his banquet,—these were warnings to this crowned fool, but they had all been fruitless.

Is it not literally an every day experience that an inscription always before the eyes is little heeded? I imagine that the ancient Athenians paid little heed to the moral sentences which were carved upon the Hermæ in every street. I imagine that the Turks of Constantinople have taken but little notice of that Ὁ χριστὸς νικᾷ (The Christ conquers) which remains, legible and unobliterated, like a prophecy which shall still be fulfilled, upon their central mosque.

And just in the same way do we not, all of us alike, often thus neglect and forget the notices of God? Yes; and that is why in dealing with us He is obliged now and then to *make* us see them—to force their meaning into us—to interpret them again when the dimmed wall has been painted over with other symbols, and familiarity has made them meaningless to eyes that will not see. Condensed from *In the Days of Thy Youth,* by *F. W. Farrar.*

24. *This writing was inscribed.* The feast clearly took place in the palace; and it is evident that when the king saw the vision, he was under the influence of wine. Either of two things may have helped to cause the vision. One is, that the words, *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* may have been there, before the king's eyes, permanently inscribed on the wall, in cuneiform characters. The standards of weights and measures were probably kept at the palace, and there would be fixed spots in the palace halls for testing them, or possibly for weighing the royal revenues, which may have been paid in kind as well as in coin. Near the spots where this was done the words recorded may have been inscribed; *Mene* marking the place where the goods were counted; *Tekel,* that where they were weighed; and *Upharsin,* that where they were classified as to quality, and separated. (I am told that such a thing is to be seen in the cathedral at Freiburg, in the Black Forest, where a loaf of bread on the wall marks the spot where the town bread is weighed.)

The other supposition is that the inscriptions may not have been in the Banquet Hall, but in some other part of the palace, where the king had often seen them, and that they came up vividly to his mind. Or a serving-man may have opened a door, through which they became visible from the royal seat. The vision of the hand was due to Belshazzar's guilty conscience, as he knew that he was committing sacrilege in drinking out of the holy vessels from Jerusalem. *Margaret D. Gibson,* in *Expository Times.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

24. *Then was the part of the hand sent.* While walking one day through the streets of Jerusalem, I saw a number of masons busy rebuilding and transforming an old house. Over the doorway I noticed, in passing, a rude impression of the human hand which had evidently been made a short time previously in the soft mortar. On inquiry I was told that it is the custom of masons in Jerusalem to impress this sign upon the structure they are building in order to avert the evil eye and to secure success in their labors.

The Jews interpret the five fingers of the handprint as symbolizing the five names of God, which are very potent in averting evil. Dr. Chapin says that the Jewish wedding-ring in Jerusalem is in the form of a hand. Chains consisting of the different fingers of the hand made of gold, or silver, or glass, are worn by Moslem, Jewish and Christian children alike around their necks to protect them from the evil eye. This superstition is not of Jewish but of Babylonian origin, and from the earliest ages has been widespread over all the world.

The prevalence of this kind of ornamentation in Assyria and Babylonia

lends a new and weird significance to the tragical incident which happened in Belshazzar's palace on the night before the overthrow of his capital. The king and his courtiers were celebrating the great resurrection and marriage feast of Ishtar and Tammus—the Babylonian Adonis. In all likelihood the cornice of the great hall in which the banquet was spread, was adorned with representations of the Hand of Might as an object of idolatrous worship. And the sevenfold light of the splendid Jewish candlestick, carried away as a spoil of war from the Temple of Jerusalem, standing in the centre of the table, would bring out in vivid light and shade the mystic symbol. Under the protection of the Hand of Might, Belshazzar feared not the enemy that was thundering at his gate, and felt free to indulge his mad revels with his courtiers. They filled the sacred golden vessels of the temple again and again with the intoxicating wine, and sang songs, we are especially told, "in the praise of their gods, of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone"; while they mocked and defied the God of Israel, whose consecrated vessels they were polluting with their profane orgies. When the mad revelry was at its height, suddenly under the cornice ornamented with the Hand of Might, on the wall in front of the King, illumined by the full light of the seven-branched golden candlestick, there appeared the shadow of a hand with its fingers writing three words of terrible import, in a language which no one knew. The idol effigy, the superstitious charm on the palace-cornice was of no avail. It could not ward off the impending fate. The angel of the Lord cast His vision into the mold of the Hand of Might, in which the pagan revelers put their trust for salvation. Nothing but the hand was visible, while the awful unseen figure was left to be imagined in all its dread suggestiveness, in the background. It was in the hand they put their confidences, and that hand wrote the sentence of doom. There is something unspeakably terrible in this sudden transformation of a power that was supposed to be friendly into an enemy—of what was looked to for protection into an avenging fate. The king and his courtiers had changed God's vessels of holiness into vessels of drunkenness, therefore God changed their charms and amulets into instruments of destruction. Condensed from *Gleanings in Holy Fields,* by *Hugh Macmillan.*

25. *The writing.* Several thousand contract tablets of this period have been discovered and published, which throw light upon the social customs and manners of the people with whom the Hebrew had daily come in contact.

Of great value are the brief Aramaic legends found on these archives. They were either scratched deeply into the clay, or lightly with some kind of instrument. The act is that of docketing, but the proper term in legal parlance for the writing is "endorsement". In other words, after the tablet was written in the cuneiform script in the legal language, which in this case is Babylonian, endorsements were written upon them, as for instance, a lawyer of the present day endorses a deed or contract by stating its character, etc., as a reference note in filing the paper. In some cases the Aramaic endorsements describe the nature of the document: in other cases it simply records the name of the recipient.

The question arises, Why were these endorsements not written in cuneiform, the regular script of the Babylonian language, instead of Aramaic, the language of Armenia? Without any doubt it points to the fact that the endorsements were written in the tongue of the record keeper, or more probably in the language of the man in whose interest the tablets were written.

The cuneiform script continued to be used until the third or second century before Christ, and even later. The scribes continued to study Babylonian as the literary and legal language of the country, and employed it in writing contracts, letters, etc., but it is reasonable to conjecture that the usage of the language was on the decline as early as the sixth century B. C. The tongue of the common people seems to have been Aramaic, which eventually crowded out the Babylonian with its most difficult cuneiform script. The intercommercial use of the language, the fact that many Western Semites had emigrated to this region, besides the descendants of war captives and merchants who lived there, and that for writing purposes the Aramaic, with its short alphabet, was infinitely easier to learn than the difficult cuneiform

script, with its five hundred characters, give us reasons for the theory that the Aramaic gradually supplanted the Babylonian as the spoken language of the land.

When we realize that in Belshazzar's time the language which the lords knew in their official capacity, as well as that which the average man very probably understood, was the Aramaic, we have reasons why the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic (Dan. 2.4), and why the inscription on the wall was written in that language. Doubtless the characters were clearly intelligible to all who were present, but it required a Daniel, in his prophetic spirit, to interpret them. Condensed from *Light on the Old Testament*, by *Albert T. Clay*.

27. *Thou art weighed in the balances.* On the walls of the famous Rock Tomb of Thebes there is a representation of the Hall of Judgment. Osiris, the presiding deity, holds in one hand a shepherd's crook and in the other a scourge, while on the scales of justice before him lies the heart of a human being.

Ancient Egyptian Death Judgment From a Drawing on a Sepulchral Papyrus Roll

"It is highly probable," says Layard, in "Babylon and Assyria," "that the curious series of bronze lions discovered at Nimrod during my first researches were used for weights. Since the coating of green rust has been removed from them, they are found in several instances to have two short inscriptions, one in cuneiform characters with the name of Sennacherib, the other in Phœnician letters. Dr. Lepsius has published a bas-relief from an Egyptian tomb, representing a man weighing rings of gold or silver, with weights in the form of a bull's head, and of a seated lion with a ring on its back, precisely similar to those from Nineveh, now in the British Museum."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As the second Sunday in November is the annual World's Temperance Sunday our Lesson Committee has postponed till now the lesson of Belshazzar's Feast and Fate, since it can be used as the basis of a temperance talk. Chronologically it precedes lesson XIII of last quarter.

It is October 538 B. C.; the scene, Babylon on the last night before its capture by the Persians. To understand the situation one must recall the history of Babylonia since the time of Nebuchadnezzar. See the Historical Background of Lesson III, p. 391.

Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon. His son was the Belshazzar of our lesson. Because no secular historian names Belshazzar, it was argued that he never existed. But in the ruins of a temple at Mugheir (Ur) an inscription giving an account of the restoration of the temple of Sin, the Moon-god, by Nabonidus (called Nabonahid) has been discovered which contains these words: "As for me, Nabonidus, King of Babylon, from sin against thy great divinity save me, and a life of remote days give as a gift; and as for Belshazzar, the eldest son, the offspring of my heart, the fear of thy great divinity cause thou to exist in his heart, and let not sin possess him—let him be satisfied with fulness of life". Belshazzar was the heir to the throne of Babylon, but the monuments do not indicate that he ever reigned. The Book of Daniel calls him King of Babylon; he seems to have been the commander of the army, and he may have governed Babylon as viceroy and have been popularly known as king, or he may have actually shared the throne with his father Nabonidus.

When Cyrus in his triumphant progress marched toward Babylon, Nabonidus

met him on the northern border of Babylonia and his army was defeated. The Persian army under the generalship of Gobryas captured the north Babylonian town of Sippar, and next entered the outer part of Babylon without a battle, and captured Nabonidus, who had retreated to the city. The history is not clear, but probably Belshazzar was in command of the inner city, and feeling secure behind its huge walls, was feasting one night two weeks later, when Cyrus himself made his triumphant entry. "That night Belshazzar was slain."

A cylinder inscription says: "To the city of Babylon he (the god Merodach) comamnded him (Cyrus) to go, he made him take the road to Babylon; like a friend and helper he went by his side, without contest and battle he made him enter into Babylon his city; Babylon he spared from tribulation. All the people of Babylon, princes and governors, kissed his feet; they rejoiced in his kingdom, bright was their countenance." It was Cyrus who permitted the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem, Lesson III of this Quarter.

(Herodotus says that Cyrus diverted the waters of the Euphrates, which flowed through the city, into the great basin made by Nebuchadnezzar, and then marched his troops along the river-bed, under the walls and into the city, and that the city was given over to pillage and destruction. It is believed that Herodotus must have referred to the second capture of Babylon by Darius, the third ruler after Cyrus, some twenty years later.)

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Wonderful is it that recently Nebuchadnezzar's palace and the hall where Cyrus the conqueror of Babylon was enthroned in B. C. 538 have been unearthed by the explorers of Babylon's ruins. In this hall Belshazzar may have held his great feast.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Review the lesson about Daniel and his companions when they were first brought to the court of Babylon, Lesson XI of last quarter. Bring out the thought that when Daniel was young he was not afraid to do what was right. Years afterwards he was not afraid to tell a king that he had done many wicked things. In teaching the lesson story dwell upon the pride of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Use the illustration of the bottle, p. 429. If you have time for a brief temperance talk, use the illustration given for younger pupils, below.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Have you learned at school what is the largest bird in the world that flies? It is the condor of the Andes Mountains in South America. It can fly more swiftly than the eagle, and is so powerful and strong that men who have tried to capture it without weapons have scarcely been able to escape with their lives. There is only one time when the condor can be approached safely by a cautious strong hunter, and that is after it has had a heavy meal, for it is a very greedy bird and eats so much that it is then incapable of flight. You see the bird is much like some people who eat and drink till they are stupid if not really drunk. Such a man was Belshazzar, who ruled in Babylon when the prophet Daniel was living. Where was Babylon? What have we already learned about Daniel?

For Older Pupils. Can you tell me of some happenings in your life lately that taught you a lesson which you will profit from when a similar thing occurs again? Could you have learned this lesson without going through this experience? Is experience usually "a dear school"? Coleridge says somewhere that experience is like the stern-lights of a ship: it illuminates only the path over which we have traveled. There are other ships which have gone over the same path ahead of ours, and their stern-lights can throw light upon our path before we travel over it. What do I mean by this figure? The experiences of others are like the stern-lights of ships ahead of us, which can show us the dangerous rocks in time to avoid them. How did Daniel teach this thought?

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Profit from the Experiences of Others

Though thou knewest all This.

If only myself could talk to myself
As I knew him a year ago,
I could tell him a lot
That would save him a lot
Of things he ought to know.

So muses Kipling, and he voices the thought of us all. We profit by our own experience, but too late to "save us a lot" that we might have been saved had we known earlier what we thus learn. And how much of this knowledge we might hare learned in time from the experience of others!

Belshazzar had known how Nebuchadnezzar's proud heart had been humbled and his rebellious spirit punished but he failed to take the lesson to himself. This is the thought that the prophet Daniel emphasized. "Thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this." And that night Belshazzar was slain.

The Teaching of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. Life is a business which men have to get through if possible decently and well, and they have to learn the proper ways of conducting the business. There is a training in it, a necessary education, things that must be found out somehow if failure is to be avoided. The young man especially who is beginning this business of life needs to be willing to learn, to listen humbly to warning and advice. Of course, life will teach its own lessons by its own method of encouragement and punishment, but the discipline in the school of life is very hard, making no allowance for ignorance or mistakes. It strikes hard when the time for striking comes, and it seems a pity that beginners should not be able to utilize the hard-worn experience of the wisdom of the race. They might at least be so fore-armed as to be able to take advantage of the first indication of a lesson from the great schoolmaster life.

So, the teachable mind, the willing ear, the open tractable disposition, these are the first requisitions for an apt pupil. Pride is the one unassailable stupidity. Pride is looked on here as an absolute bar to knowledge. It is the quality which marks the fool. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." The chief reason the book gives for this inconsistent attitude to pride and self-sufficiency is that pride makes it impossible for a man to learn wisdom. It deprives him of any advantage to be got from the experience of others: it even takes away any chance of learning from the experiences of self. This is in line with a deeper spiritual note which is all through the Bible that humility is the door to everything, the way to life itself. The humble soul, ready to hear, willing to accept reproof, will learn the secret of God. *Hugh Black,* in *The Gift of Influence.*

The Nations of To-day must profit from God's Dealings with the Nations of the Past. Since the dominion of man was asserted over the ocean, three thrones of mark beyond all others have been set upon its sands—the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the first of these great powers only the memory remains, of the second the ruins; the third, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction. *John Ruskin,* in *Stones of Venice.*

There is Inspiration as well as Warning to be gained from Others' Experiences. There is rich hope buried in the experiences of yesterday, as rich sunshine is buried in our mines. Just as we can bring out the coal deposits and make it yield light and warmth for the life of to-day, so we can go to buried experiences of the saints of the past and make them yield enlightenment and inspiration for the saints of to-day. *J. H. Jowett,* in *An Address.*

II Tekel

Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. These three fatal words carry in them the summing up of all divine judgment, and will be rung in the ears of all who bring it on themselves. Belshazzar is a type of the end of every godless world-

power and of every such individual life. Numbered—for God allows to each his definite time, and when its sum is complete, down falls the knife that cuts the threads. Weighed—for after death the judgment, and a godless life, when laid in the balance which His hand holds, is altogether lighter than vanity. Breakings—for not only will the godless life be torn away from its possessions with much lacerations of heart and spirit, but the man himself will be broken like some earthen vessel coming into a sharp collision with an express engine. Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the same night in which it was carried out in action; we see it long before and we can read it. But some of us are mad enough to sit unconcerned at the table, and go on with the orgy, though the legible letters are gleaming plain on the wall. The ominous writing could hardly have faded from the wall when the shouts of the assailants were heard, the palace gates forced, and the half-drunken king, alarmed too late, put to sword. He who being oft reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *The Book of Daniel.*

Sensitive Scales. Should you say that it is possible to weigh the soul of a fly or the mark made by a pencil on a sheet of paper? This is what Mr. J. F. Liedler, a California jeweler, can do. He calls the difference between the weight of a living fly and the same fly dead, its soul, though others say it is the weight of the gases that have escaped from the body of the dead fly. His remarkably sensitive scale works within a watch case the dial of which is marked off into "degrees". The difference between the weight of the living and the dead fly is twenty-three degrees, one degree representing a weight of one four-million, nine hundred-thousandth of an ounce! A mark a quarter of an inch long made by a soft lead pencil weighs about twice as much as the "soul of the fly."

So, in the words of James Russell Lowell, life is constantly weighing us in sensitive scales, and telling every one of us precisely what our real weight is, to the last grain of dust.

God shall bring Every Work into Judgment. The Scriptures do not deal much in elaborate descriptions of that great day of reckoning, or of the sufferings beyond. What they are earnest to have us all know, and feel, and remember is, that there is a reckoning, and that the justice and love of the Son of God and Son of Man will control and guide it. What they would make certain to us is that our everlasting life is in actual peril from our daily temptations, that the Judge is just, and that there can be no change in His judgment. Grounded in these certainties their one entreaty is, "Be ye ready." *Bishop Huntington.*

III Belshazzar's Sins

Intemperance. Belshazzar is often referred to as having met his death while drunk with wine. The Book of Daniel does not say this. The first verse of our chapter reads: Belshazzar the king made a great feast to the thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. And the last verse reads: In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. It was a feast of folly, and such Babylonian feasts usually ended with revelry and drunkenness.

When the Allies entered Paris after the battle of Waterloo the rattle of artillery over the pavement prevented a large audience in one of the theatres from hearing the play: they had the doors closed and gave no further thought to what those ominous sounds meant. So to Belshazzar came the report of the approach of the enemy from the north, and then the noise of their arrival could be heard at the very walls of the city, but he shut himself up within his palace and gave himself up to the enjoyment of a great feast, with its accompaniments of "wine, wife and song".

(For temperance ammunition see pp. 145, 220, 351.)

Pride. According to Confucius there was a certain water-vessel which hung obliquely when empty, vertically when half-full, and turned over and spilled its contents when full to the brim. This water-vessel was hung on the right of the throne to warn its occupant against "fulness", or pride, which precedes a fall. Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar had both needed such a warning. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by the might of my power?" cried Nebuchadnezzar in all his pride, and then he was driven forth as a wild beast

till he learned that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever He will". And Belshazzar's heart, like Nebuchadnezzar's, was lifted up with pride, and retribution came.

Irreverence. All praise had Belshazzar for the idols that were but sticks and stones, but the God to whom he owed life and fortune he would not glorify.

Quick the king spoke, while his proud glance burned,
Quickly the servant went and returned.
He bore on his head the vessels of gold
Of Jehovah's temple the plunder bold.
With daring hand, in his frenzy grim
The king seized a beaker and filled to the brim,
And drained to the dregs the sacred cup,
And foaming he cried, as he drank it up,
"Jehovah, eternal scorn, I own
To thee. I am monarch of Babylon."

Thus the German poet Heine pictures the scene. Even to a pagan mind such a use of sacred vessels was sacrilege. It was a bold defiance of the Most High God. Could God's blessing follow?

When Denmark and Sweden were at war with each other the Swedes were besieging the city of Altona and threatening to burn it to the ground. Pastor Johann Sasse went out to meet the Swedish general and threw himself at his feet exclaiming, "Have mercy upon the innocent city for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Indeed!" returned General Steenback, "I am acting under higher orders". "If that is so," the pastor said, "if in truth you must give to the flames a poor city at the order of a higher one, and you yourself are not guilty of this cruel deed, receive the blessing of the Lord, who will some time judge you: the Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace." Altona was burned. At Tömmingen General Steenback was captured by the Danes, and when he lay in prison awaiting death he said: "I have received many a curse, but not one that lay so heavy upon my heart as that blessing of the pastor of Altona."

SENTENCE SERMONS

The face of the Lord is against them that do evil. Psa. 34.16.

Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. *Emerson.*

It is part of the tragedy of sin that the delinquent rarely sees his peril. *George Clarke Peck.*

The ear that hearkeneth to the reproof of life
Shall abide among the wise. Prov. 15.31.

God deals with souls as men deal with sovereigns, which they examine and weigh one by one. *T. T. Lynch.*

Why will men persist in thinking they can cheat God? His eye beholdeth every precious thing, and every base thing, too. *Frank Johnson.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

If drunk with sight of power, we loose
  Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
  Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget! *Kipling.*

Example after example can we recall which should teach us the lesson of humility. Though we know all this, do we profit by it?

Sooner or later retribution follows wrong.

Into the heart of that royal reveler the conviction came that there is a Hand that rules this world, and the conviction made him tremble. The Christian rejoices in the thought.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

At a great feast in his palace at Babylon, to which a thousand lords and all the women of his harem had been summoned, Belshazzar the king had the wine served in the golden vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the temple in Jerusalem. As they drank from these sacred vessels, they praised their false gods of gold and silver, of brass and iron, of wood and stone.

Suddenly a strange sight met the king's eyes as he gazed at the palace wall. Upon the plaster over against the candlestick the fingers of a man's hand wrote three words. The king's face paled, his limbs trembled, and in terror he sent for the professional "wise men" of Babylon, promising a purple robe and chain of gold and the position of third ruler in the kingdom to whoever would interpret that writing. All were unable to do this, and at the suggestion of the queen Daniel was sent for, whom Nebuchadnezzar had found a wise interpreter of dreams.

Daniel refused the king's gifts, but agreed to interpret the writing. Before doing this, he boldy told the king of his guilt. He reminded him how Nebuchadnezzar had been indebted to God for his glory and power; how his pride had brought him low, till he was driven off to live like the beast which in his insanity he thought himself to be, and then with returning sanity he had acknowledged that to God all power and glory belonged. Daniel told Belshazzar that though he had known all this, he had not humbled himself but had insulted Almighty God by drinking wine from vessels consecrated to Him, and by worshipping senseless idols of gold and stone. Therefore this writing had been inscribed to warn him of the punishment close at hand.

Then Daniel read and interpreted the writing on the wall. Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end. Tekel: thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres: thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Belshazzar commanded his officers to give the promised reward to Daniel. And that very night the king was slain.

"Crownless and sceptreless Belshazzar lay
A robe of purple round a form of clay."

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The care of drunkards.
2. Retribution.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Who was the leader of the first company of exiles who returned to Jerusalem? 2. By whose authority did he return? 3. How long was this before Ezra's journey? 4. Read chapters 7 and 8 of Ezra. 5. Why did Ezra want to go to Jerusalem? 6. Who was the King of Persia at this time? 7. What powers did the king give Ezra? 8. Where was the Ahava? (Clipping, p. 434.) 9. What was the value in our money of a silver talent? (Bible Dictionary.) 10. Of a gold talent? 11. What was the total value of the gold and silver and vessels? 12. How long was the journey? 13. How long were they on the way?

Questions to think about. What is the last record we have had about the people in Jerusalem? 2. How many years before Ezra's journey? 3. What had happened meanwhile? (Clipping, p. 434.) 4. What other king's decree is recalled by that of Artaxerxes? 5. Why did Ezra want Levites in his company? 6. Why was Ezra unwilling to ask the king for a military escort? 7. Was such an escort desirable? 8. Was it prudent for him to go on such a journey without one? 9. Why was it right for Ezra to go without one, and right for Nehemiah to go with one, Neh. 2.9? 10. Why did Ezra show great prudence in the disposition of the treasure when he would not in the matter of a guard?

Note-Book Work. Turn to the space left in your record of Daniel, in the book you are writing of "The Jews during and after Exile," and write Part IV: Daniel's Interpretation of the Writing on the Wall.

LESSON VIII—NOVEMBER 19

EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Golden Text

The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him. Ezra 8.22.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Ezra 8.15-36. Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem. **T.** Ezra 7.1-10. Ezra's Purpose in this Journey. **W.** Ezra 7.11-28. Ezra's Royal Firman (Permit). **T.** Ezra 8.1-14. Ezra's List of Heads of Houses. **F.** Ezra 9.1-15. Ezra's Prayer for Israel. **S.** Ezra 10.1-17. Separating Israel from the People of the Land. **S.** 2 Cor. 5.20-6.18. "Be not unequally Yoked with Unbelievers." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Ezra 8.15-36 PRINT vv. 21-32 COMMIT vv. 21,23

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this; and he was entreated of us.

24 Then I set apart twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25 and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his princes, and all Israel there present, had offered: 26 I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents; of gold a hundred talents: 27 and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold. 28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto Jehovah, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill-offering unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers. 29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' *houses* of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah. 30 So the priests and the Levites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

21. *A fast.* "A spiritual exercise": compare 1 S. 7.6; 2 Ch. 20.3.—*A straight way.* A direct, unimpeded way, a prosperous journey.

22. *Enemy.* Robbers.—*The hand of our God.* Ezra 7.6,9,28.—*Forsake him.* Trusting in the king's escort of soldiers rather than in God seemed to Ezra a forsaking of God.

23. *For this.* That His hand might be upon them for good, that they might have a prosperous journey.—*Entreated of us.* Looking backward after the journey was made, Ezra knew that God had been with them.

24. *Set apart twelve.* From the rest of the priests who were going to Jeru-

salem.—*Priests.* In Neh. 12.24, *Levites,* RVm.—*Even.* Or, *besides,* RVm. According to the marginal rendering there were twelve priests and twelve Levites.

25. *Weighed unto them.* Delivered unto them by weight.—*The silver and the gold.* See 7.15-18.—*The vessels.* See 7.19,27.—*The house of our God.* The temple at Jerusalem.

26. *Six hundred and fifty talents of silver.* Estimating a silver talent as worth $1,875 (Hastings), this means nearly a million and a quarter in our money.—*Silver vessels a hundred talents, i e.* worth a hundred talents, or $187,500.—*Of gold a hundred talents.* A gold talent was worth about $33,750 (Hastings), the hundred talents therefore, $3,375,000.

27. *Darics.* A gold coin of Persia, worth about $5.

28. *Holy unto Jehovah.* Consecrated, set apart for His service; Lev. 21.6.

29. *Princes of the fathers' houses of Israel.* The leading men.—*The chambers of the house of Jehovah.* The store-rooms around the centre walls of the outer court of the temple; 1 K. 6.5; 1 Ch. 28.12.

31. *First month.* Nisan, April.

32. *We came to Jerusalem.* On the first day of the fifth month, Ezra 7.8.—*Three days.* For rest.

33. *Into.* Or, *by,* RVm.—*Meremoth.* Neh. 3.4,21.—*Eleazar.* Neh. 12.42.

34. *By number.* The vessels.—*By weight.* The gold and silver.

35. *The children...exile.* Ezra's company.—*Offered.* Compare the offering of Zerubbabel and his company, Ezra 6.17.

36. *The king's commissions.* Ezra 7.21,22,24.—*Satraps.* Rulers of provinces.—*Governors.* Rulers of part of a district, a part of a province.—*Beyond the river.* Beyond the Euphrates.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

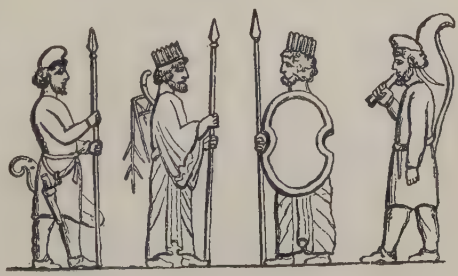
1-14. It is interesting to notice names that had occurred in the earlier list of the followers of Zerubbabel, showing that some of the descendants of those who refused to go on the first expedition took part in the second. They remind us of Christiana and her children, who would not join the Pilgrim when he set out from the City of Destruction, but who subsequently followed in his footsteps. But there was little at Jerusalem to attract a new expedition, for the glamor which had surrounded the first return, with a son of David at its head, had faded in grievous disappointment; and the second series of pilgrims had to carry with them the torch with which to rekindle the flames of devotion. *Walter F. Adeny,* in *Expositor's Bible.*

21. *That we might humble ourselves before God.* Happy are they who have the grace to walk in the valley of humiliation, for this leads to the armory of supernatural power. *Walter F. Adeney.*

31. *The hand of our God was upon us.* On all my expeditions, prayer made me stronger, morally and mentally, than any of my non-praying companions. It did not blind my eyes, or dull my mind, or close my ears; but, on the contrary, it gave me confidence. It did more: it gave me joy, and pride, in my work, and lifted me hopefully over the one thousand five hundred miles of forest tracks, eager to face the day's perils and fatigues...Civilized society rejoices in the protection afforded to it by strong-armed law. Those in whom faith in God is strong feel the same sense of security in the deepest wilds. *Henry M. Stanley.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

22. *To help us against the enemy in the way.* Although Ezra's company was a large one, wandering Bedouins, wild men of the desert, might attack and



Persian Soldiers

plunder, if not kill, the rear column. No caravan to-day, however large, would think of carrying on that journey such an amount of gold and silver without an armed guard.

27. *Fine bright brass, precious as gold.* Whether brass, the alloy of copper and zinc, was known to the Persians is doubtful. Utensils of bronze, the alloy of copper and tin, and of copper, were in use.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first company of exiles returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, 538 B. C. (Review Lesson III of this Quarter). The curtain of history falls in Judea after the second temple was dedicated at Jerusalem in 516 B. C., in the sixth year of Darius King of Persia. (Review Lesson IV.) It rises again in 458 B. C., the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, when Ezra had "set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances", and began his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. Evidently in the course of these nearly sixty years there had been a decline in religious zeal in Jerusalem, and the temple worship was being neglected.

The Name of Artaxerxes

We know that meanwhile the Persians invaded Greece and by the famous battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Platæa were driven back from the shores of Europe. The revolt of Egypt in the reign of Darius (487) and again in that of Artaxerxes (462-456) brought the Persian army through Syria, and probably the people in Judea were called upon for supplies and even for service. But of what actually happened in Judea during these fifty-eight years between the completion of the temple and the coming of Ezra we have no knowledge. It is possible but not certain that the later chapters of Zechariah and some chapters of Isaiah refer to this period.

There is a note in Ezra 4.6 to the effect that in the beginning of Xerxes' reign (485) enemies accused the Jews in a letter to the king, of sympathy with the Egyptian revolt, it has been plausibly conjectured. Instigated by the Samaritans, Persian officials in Syria sent a letter to Artaxerxes, Ezra 4.11-16, warning him that he would lose Jerusalem if he allowed the Jews to rebuild their walls and city. Whereupon Artaxerxes commanded the building to cease.

What caused Artaxerxes to change his policy toward Jerusalem, and give Ezra, the priest and scribe, full authority to go to Jerusalem with rich offerings for the temple from himself and his counselors, is not told.

For the time of Ezra's visit as regards Nehemiah's activities, see the Historical Background of the next lesson.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The location of Casiphia, whence the Levites were secured (8.17) is not known. It may be the name of what we should term a training-school for priests.

The river Ahava, by which Ezra reviewed his company, must have been one of the tributaries or canals of the Euphrates, not very far from Babylon.

"As the crow flies," the distance across the desert between Babylon and Jerusalem was about five hundred miles, but by the caravan route around the desert it was at least nine hundred miles, and the journey, on foot by the greater number, would require the three months and a half spent. All that Ezra tells about the journey are the words: We came to Jerusalem.

Have the outline of the map on page 53 copied on your blackboard, and trace the route as you discuss it, following up the Euphrates from Babylon as far as Haran (the probable route), then turning southwestwardly to the Jordan and down the Jordan Valley as far as the ford of the Jabbok, thence up to Jerusalem.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Ask your pupils if it can ever be wrong for little girls to play with dolls. Tell them that in heathen lands, where the people worship idols, they have been known to think that dolls were idols, and little daughters of missionaries have given up their dolls so that the people may not think their fathers were talking about the wrong of worshipping idols while they had idols in their own homes. The hero of our lesson gave up something that was good and right for him to have, so that a king might not misunderstand his loyalty to God.

Teach the lesson with the map, show how long and hard and dangerous the journey would be for that great company of men, women and children; the road part of the way sandy and hot, with little water; the robbers lying in wait to attack them; some of the people on camels or asses, but most of them on foot, for there were no railroads then. Ezra and the people knew all this, yet they were eager to go to Jerusalem, the city where trouble and hardships awaited them. Tell them of a little girl of Jewish birth told about in this morning's newspaper. With many other Jews she was being taken away from her home in Kiev, for the Russians have just issued a very different decree in regard to the Jews from that of the king in our lesson—one that drives them away from their home instead of letting them return to it. She would rather die than live away from her home, she thought, and so she jumped out of the window of the train as it was going at full speed. Jerusalem was the home of these Jews who were going with Ezra, even though they had never seen it.

Explain why Ezra would not ask the King for soldiers: show his great trust in God, his prayer for God's help, his care for the safety of the treasures he was carrying to God's house.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. An agent for a fountain pen had received a large order from a dealer. He took from his pocket note-book and pencil and was about to write down the order, when the purchaser hastily said he had changed his mind, and he would not make the purchase, and then left him. The agent was dumbfounded. Can you guess what was the trouble? The would-be purchaser thought those fountain pens could not be depended upon, else the agent would have kept one in use himself instead of using a lead pencil. Was he right? If any one talks about how true another one is, how certain he is to keep his promises, and then does something that shows he does not trust him himself, what may others think about his words?

For Older Pupils. Is it right for one who trusts God to insure his house against fire? Is it right for him to make provision for his family in his old age? What is our Golden Text? If God's hand is upon all His true followers for good, should they not leave all things to Him and trust that He will take care of them? Let us see what our lesson teaches as to this.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Piety and Prudence

A Crisis that called for Piety without Prudence. When Nehemiah went from Shushan to Jerusalem he went under the protection of captains of the army and horsemen of the king. When Ezra took the same journey, he went trusting in the protection of God alone. Which did right? Both. It was only common prudence for Nehemiah to have a sufficient defense on a long journey when attacks from Bedouins were likely to be made. Ezra, however, felt that his position was peculiar. He had told the king what great things God could do, and if now he asked the king for human protection on that perilous journey, he believed the king would think that he had only been talking—that he did not really trust God's power.

Recall the temptation scene. Then the devil taketh Jesus into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and,

On their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Did Jesus do as did Ezra, throw prudence to the winds, and prove His trust in God? Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God, was His answer.

Whether or not we agree with Ezra's reasoning, we admire his loyalty to God and his wonderful trust. When no principle was at stake, he could be as prudent and business-like as any one. Witness the great care he took with the vast amount of money and treasures that went with them on the journey. He set apart men whose sole duty it was to guard them, and on reaching Jerusalem he had the silver and gold and vessels weighed in the temple, and the amount written down, that it might be seen to equal the amount received in Babylon. It was the special occasion that freed Ezra from the guilt of making trial of the Lord his God. As a rule, such imprudence would have been presumption. As a rule, occasions are rare in the life of a Christian when he is justified in trusting in God, without making use of whatever assistance he rightly can use for his safety.

When Reliance upon God without Personal Effort was not Presumption. When Paul and Silas were in prison at Philippi, their feet fast in the stocks, what prudential measures could they take for their release? Yet most persons in their circumstances would have spent the night in great anxiety. Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of praise, for they were confident of God's power to release them. And the wonderful deliverance vindicated their trust.

Mr. W. J. Mosier, writing in the *Christian Intelligence*, gives this incident. In 1799, when the armies of Napoleon were sweeping over the Continent, Masséna, one of his generals, suddenly appeared on the heights above the little town of Feldkirk, on the frontier of Austria, with an army of 18,000 men. It was Easter Day, and as the morning sun glittered upon the weapons of the French, the town council hastily assembled to consult what was to be done. Should a deputation be sent to Masséna, with the keys of the town, and an entreaty for mercy, or should they attempt resistance? Then the old dean of the church stood up and said: "This is Easter Day. We have been counting on our own strength, and that fails This is the day of our Lord's Resurrection. Let us ring the bells and have service as usual, and leave the matter in God's hands. We know only our weakness and not the power of God." Then all at once from three or four church towers the bells began to chime joyous peals in honor of the day, and the streets were filled with worshippers hastening to the house of God. The French heard with surprise and alarm the sudden clangor of joy bells, and concluded that the Austrian army had arrived in the night to relieve the place. Masséna soon broke up his camp, and before the bells had ceased ringing not a Frenchman was to be seen.

Piety without Prudence that is Presumption. According to the view of the Christian Scientist, the presence of the physician in the sick-room is equivalent to a disavowal of the faith, a bit of tangible atheism, a thing as heathenish as the calling in the medicine-men of a savage tribe. We ought to be ashamed to summon medical aid seeing that we have boasted of the hand of our God being upon us for good. But this view throughout is miserably mistaken. The whole conception springs out of a lack of appreciation of the divinity that pervades all things, and betrays blindness to the glorious fact that natural laws and processes are the appointments of God and the channels of His grace, which, indeed, they are. There is no Christian Science except as all true science is Christian, and the cultured physician, working closely on the lines which condition health, is a loyal servant of God and humanity, in whom the pious sufferer has special grounds for trust. John Wesley tells that on a certain occasion he was "cured by sulphur and supplication," and all men who are wise as they are good will practice the dual treatment. To refuse medical aid and its prescriptions, trusting wholly in God, may by some be mistaken for a sublime faith, but it is really practical atheism, ignoring as it does the established order of God. Religious men must not presume on a guardianship unknown to other men, and in consequence neglect worldly caution. A marine-insurance company at Cadiz once took the Virgin Mary into partnership, covenanting to set aside her portion of the profits for the enrichment of her shrine in that city, not doubting that she would protect every vessel in which she had such a manifest

interest. The infatuated company underwrote ships of all sorts at reduced rates, and forthwith came to grief. The same snare entices spiritually minded men to-day; dispensing with ordinary circumspection, they attempt to conduct their business on what they consider a religious basis, when they ought to know that the most religious basis is the sound commercial basis. *W. L. Watkinson,* in *Inspiration for Common Life.*

II Theory and Practice in Religion

Ashamed to be Disloyal to God. Ezra's religion was real. He could have had no comfort from the presence of a guard, greatly though it might be needed; it would have been to him a constant reminder of his disloyalty to God. He had boasted of what great things the Lord would do for His followers; he was ashamed then to turn around and ask the king, to whom he had made his assertions, for human protection.

Ezra's position, that religion must stand the test of life, should be that of all Christians.

Each fretful line upon their brow,
Dug by the plow of care,
Is treason to their pledge of faith
And satire on their prayer,

rightly asserts Frederick Lawrence Knowles. What is one's trust in God worth if it can not free him from anxiety? Thought for the morrow one must have, but not anxious thought, taught Christ.

What Counts. There is always some one who is judging the truths of a Christian's profession by the Life that Christian leads. Bishop Quayle in an address said a genuine Christian could be told by his street-car manners. "If you are hanging on a strap in a crowded street car," he said, "and the conductor calls out 'Step forward, please,' and there is no place in front where you can step forward, the way you act will be a test of your religion. If you are a woman, and a man gives you his seat, and you act as if you thought it was your right and not his kindness that gave you the seat, the way you act will test you more than answering questions in theology. It is not how you treat some big body, but how you treat a little urchin, dirty, in tears—that tests your religion. What you do when you are off duty—that's what counts. What if the people who see us at church and at weddings should see us in the betweens? What we Christians do ofttimes kills faith in the church. What we do when nobody sees us ought to be as beautiful as what we do in the open."

He Practiced It. Booker Washington tells the story of how he first entered the city of Boston. He was then practically unknown. He arrived tired, dusty and travel-worn, with a heavy traveling-bag. As he was lugging it off the train, an elderly man came up beside him and offered to give a hand to help him carry his bag. The two were entirely unknown to each other. But afterward Booker Washington found that it was Edward Everett Hale who had thus lent a hand.

It was Edward Everett Hale, as we all know, who had originated the motto: "Look forward and not back; look outward and not in; look upward and not down; and lend a hand." It was a big, abstract sort of motto, which a great man might be expected to formulate and then leave to smaller workers to carry out. But the point was that Dr. Hale practised it long before he preached it, and kept it up to the end of his life of brotherly love. Precept is easy and short, conduct is hard and steady work. But conduct is three-fourths of it—and Dr. Hale did not forget the right proportion of things. The smallest "Lend-a-Hand" club of boys and girls in America was not more ready to carry out its motto in everyday detail than he was. When the postman on the Roxbury route said: "We'll all miss him. I've been his postman for twenty years, and never had a cross word from him, no matter how late I was—and he always spoke to me as if I was his friend," he testified, unconsciously, to the same thing as the Episcopal dean who called Dr. Hale "a great Christian." *Well-spring.*

She did not Practise it. This conversation is reported by a daily paper:
"What subject have you taken for your address at the Civic Club?"
"Woman's moral obligations as a citizen."
"What a lovely subject! And what are you going to wear?"
"That new gown I brought home with me from Paris. And just think, I had it so cleverly packed in with my old clothes that the custom-house inspector never discovered it was there."

III When Right Becomes Wrong

One must abstain for the Sake of Others. Whatever faith in God the king might have gained through Ezra's word, would have been lost had Ezra failed to put his own faith to the test. Ezra himself knew that to have had the protection of soldiers on the journey would not have been inconsistent with his trust in God, but he prefered to run the risk of going unattended rather than do what would have been dishonoring God in the eyes of the king. He was putting into practice the truth that Paul long years afterwards expressed in these words: "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbors' good. Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the Church of God. Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to the weak. If meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no meat for ever more, that I cause not my brother to stumble."

The Lesson from Christ's Life. That life was, from first to last, a giving up of His rights; a willing sacrifice of all that He might have claimed as His due, in order to become through self-renunciation, a Savior of the lost. So He is here, by His example, teaching me that, in my relations with other men, I am not to think simply of my own rights, but to consider how insistence on my rights may injure those who neither understand me nor sympathize with me in my claims. I am to think, not only of the inherent lawfulness of many things I do, but also of the possible harm they may do to less instructed or prejudiced men at my side. My liberty, as a child of God, whom "the Son hath made free," may give me, in a hundred things, the right to do what for the sake of others, I must forbear to do. It can never be the only question for me, "Is this lawful in itself?" I am bound to add another question, "Will it injure, in any way, those who see me do it?" Some one has well said that "Thousands do harm by the use of unlawful things, but tens of thousands by the unwise use of lawful things;" for nowhere does the Devil blind his little chapels more cunningly than close under the shadow of the great temple of Christian liberty. A thing in itself completely right and good, may be, in its effects on others, completely evil; therefore, for me a Christian, completely wrong. *G. H. Knight,* in *The Master's Questions to His Disciples.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Trust in God and keep your powder dry. *Cromwell.*

Pray to God at the beginning of thy works, that thou mayest bring them to a good conclusion. *Xenophon.*

The great cure for worry is religious faith. *Henry James.*

Happy and strong and brave shall we be—able to endure all things, and to do all things,—if we believe that every day, every hour, every moment of our life is in His hands. *Henry van Dyke.*

"Worry is a useless burden
Weighted with distrust of God."

That is a rational faith in God which is prepared to leap into the darkest gulf upon a clear indication of the divine will, but which until that indication is given plants its feet on solid ground and takes no liberties. *W. L. Watkinson.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

You recall how Edwin Markham describes the coming of that day when

He will say—the King,
Come, let us *live* the poetry we sing.

Our King says to us now, Live the religion you profess, put your trust in God to the test.

To be religious does not mean to be unbusiness-like.

Before starting on his journey Ezra took time for prayer.

Do your lives give others occasion to say, They do not wholly believe all they profess to believe about God?

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezra and the Book of Ezra.
2. Business-like principles in religious work.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

In Babylon there was a learned priest and scribe named Ezra, who had set his heart upon teaching the law to his fellow countrymen in Jerusalem. He sought permission of Artaxerxes the King of Persia to go to Jerusalem at the head of a large company of exiles. The king not only granted his request, but also gave him a great amount of gold and silver for the temple and a letter in which he directed his officers in Judah to do whatsoever Ezra might ask. "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of our fathers," exclaimed Ezra, "who hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Jehovah, and hath extended lovingkindness unto me." Ezra and his company encamped for three days at the river Ahava. On reviewing his followers Ezra discovered the absence of Levites for the temple service, and sent to Casiphia for reinforcements. Then he proclaimed a fast by the river, and they all humbled themselves before God and besought His guidance and help on the journey. Because he had professed to the king such faith in God's care, Ezra was unwilling to ask the king for the protection of soldiers and horsemen on the way, and he put his trust wholly in God. His prayer to God brought the comforting assurance that God was with them.

The treasure of gold and silver and sacred vessels for the temple, received from the king and counselors and from the Israelites, worth several millions, Ezra had weighed and counted and given into the charge of twelve princes and ten Levites, making them responsible for their safe-keeping till the treasure could be again weighed and counted before witnesses in Jerusalem.

On the twelfth day of the first month they left their place of encampment, some seven or eight thousand strong; they were divinely protected from enemies and robbers on the way, and after three months and a half they reached Jerusalem. Three days were given to rest, and then the treasures were weighed and counted in the temple and sacrifices were offered.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. When and under whom did the first group of exiles return to Jerusalem from Babylon? 2. When was the temple completed? 3. When and under whom did the second group of exiles return? 4. What was the position of many Jews who had remained in the Persian captivity? 5. Where was Shushan? 6. Who was King of Persia in the time of Nehemiah? (Neh. 2.1.) 7. What was Nehemiah's official position? 8. What was one of his duties? (Clipping, page 442.) 9. How did Daniel represent a dependent people at a foreign court? 10. How did Nehemiah gain the king's permission to visit Jerusalem? (Neh. 2.1-9.) 11. Who wrote the Book of Nehemiah? (Clipping, page 24.) 12. What is the character of the Book? (Clipping, page 25.)

Questions to think about. 1. Why was it so important that Jerusalem's walls should be restored? 2. Who was "this man," verse 11? 3. In what way did Nehemiah's return journey differ from Ezra's? (Neh. 2.9.) 4. What can you infer in regard to Nehemiah from Neh. 5.10; 8.17-18? 5. How does Nehemiah's prayer show trust? Reverence? Unselfishness? Submission? Definiteness? Penitence? Gratitude? 6. For whom are you in the habit of praying? 7. In your prayers this week remember some one each day for whom you have never prayed before.

Note-book Work. In your book of Israel during and after the Exile write an account of Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem.

LESSON IX—NOVEMBER 26

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

Golden Text

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. James 5.16.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Neh. 1. Nehemiah's Prayer. **T.** Neh. 2.1-8. Nehemiah's Prayer Answered. **W.** Num. 14.1-19. Moses' Prayer for the Israelites. **T.** 1 Sam. 7.3-14. Samuel's Prayer for God's Protection. **F.** Dan. 9.1-23. Daniel's Prayer Instantly Answered. **S.** Acts 12.1-19. The Prayer of the Church for Peter. **S.** John 17.1-26. The Prayer of Jesus for his Disciples. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Nehemiah 1 COMMIT v. 9

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.
Now it came to pass in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was
in Shushan the palace, 2 that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain
men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped,
that were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said
unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are
in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down,
and the gates thereof are burned with fire.
4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept,
and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven,
5 and said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, the God of heaven, the great and ter-
rible God, that keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and
keep his commandments: 6 let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open,
that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before
thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, while
I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee.
Yea, I and my father's house have sinned: 7 we have dealt very corruptly
against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the
ordinances, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. 8 Remember, I beseech
thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, if ye tres-
pass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples; 9 but if ye return unto me,
and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the
uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from thence, and will
bring them unto the place that I have chosen, to cause my name to dwell there.
10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by
thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now
thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy
servants, who delight to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant
this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (Now I was cupbearer
to the king.)

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *The words.* Or history.—*Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.* He is thus distinguished from the Nehemiah of Ezra 2.2 and Neh. 3.16. This first sentence is the heading of the Book of Nehemiah.—*The month Chislev.* The ninth month of the Jewish year, corresponding to the last part of November and the first of December.—*The twentieth year.* Of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, 2.1.—*Shushan.* Susa.—*Palace. Castle,* RVm.

2. *One of my brethren.* His own brother, Neh. 7.2. —*The Jews that had es-*

caped. Though free for nearly a century to return to Jerusalem if they wished, the Jews were still in the habit of speaking of the return as an escape.—*The wall is broken down and the gates are burned with fire.* Evidently this refers, not to the condition after the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar a hundred and forty-two years before this, but to the condition, after attacks of enemies, of walls restored, probably by Ezra. Ezra's action against the foreign wives (Ezra 10) would naturally result in hostilities.

4. *I sat down and wept.* Compare Ezra 9.3; 10.1. "No man will do worthy work at rebuilding the walls who has not wept over the ruins" (*Maclaren*).—*Certain days.* Three months, according to 1.1 and 2.1.—*Fasted and prayed.* Compare Ezra 8.23.—*O Jehovah, the God of heaven.* "That commencement is no mere proper invocation, conventionally regarded as the right way of beginning, but it expresses the petitioner's effort to lay hold on God's character as the ground of his hope of answer. The terms employed remarkably blend what Nehemiah had learned from the Persian religion and what from a better source. He calls upon Jehovah, the great name which was the special possession of Israel. He also uses the characteristic Persian designation of 'the God of heaven,' and identifies the bearer of that name, not with the god to whom it was originally applied, but with Israel's Jehovah. He takes the crown from the head of the false deity, and lays it at the feet of the God of his fathers" (*Maclaren*).

5. *Great and terrible God.* See Dt. 7.21.—*Keepeth covenant.* Dt. 7.9; Ex. 20. 5, 6.—*Them that love him and keep his commandments.* Ex. 20.6.

6. *Let thine ear be attentive.* Compare 2 Ch. 6.40; 7.15. Nehemiah uses a bold yet usual figure of speech, in which he ascribes to God the form of man.—*We.* Nehemiah counts himself a sharer in the guilt of the people.—*I and my father's house.* The individual and the family share in the sin of the nation.

7. *Which thou commandedst.* Dt. 28.14.

8. *If ye trespass.* Lev. 26.33; Dt. 4.27; 28.64; 30.3.

9. *If ye return.* Dt. 30.1-5.—*Through your outcasts...heavens.* See Dt. 30. 1-4.—*Unto the place that I have chosen.* Jerusalem. See Dt. 12.5.

10. *These are thy servants...hand.* Dt. 9.29.

11. *Delight to fear thy name.* "The union of fear and joy is the paradox of spiritual service" (*Ryle*).—*Thy name,* here, as often in the Old Testament, means *Thy nature, The.—This man.* The Persian king, of whom he had a request to make, as the next chapter shows.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

1. *Nehemiah.* The memoirs of Nehemiah present to us a record of noble endeavor, and show us what can be achieved by one man of courage and faith, whose life is ruled by unswerving allegiance to duty. They reveal Nehemiah as a man of deep feeling and tireless energy and stern resolution. He has his place in the history of revelation, not because of any profound thought on the problems of life, nor because of new insight into truths, but because of what he was enabled to do at a critical period of Israel's history. He was not a prophet who saw visions; nor a poet who interpreted the heart of man. He has no place in the long line of thinkers who have opened up new regions for the human spirit. He was rather a man of affairs, keen, practical, with genius for organization, a born leader of men, a man of iron nerve and passionate energy. He was a practical business man, throwing his great capacities into work for the good of his nation.

In a time like ours, when such qualities stand so high in public estimation, and among a people like us, more noted for energy than for thought, for business than for vision, it is encouraging to note how similar capabilities were in Nehemiah's case used for the kingdom of heaven. All the powers that dwell within a man can find ample scope, if they be only set to noble ends. But for the consecration of these gifts he would have been nothing but a successful man of affairs, or a high-placed permanent official, or a skilful counselor at the Persian court. Because in the power of a simple faith he gave himself to a great work, he stands in the succession of prophets and psalmists and saints and apostles, having spent himself for the Kingdom of God. *Hugh Black,* in *Listening to God.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

4. *I sat down and wept.* In the East men as well as women express their sorrow by excessive weeping.

11. *I was cupbearer to the king.* This was an office of high honor in the Persian court, held only by statesmen and courtiers. Before serving the wine to the king it was the cupbearer's duty to pour it into the palm of his hand and drink, so that it was essential for his own sake as well as for the king to make sure the wine was not poisoned.

Assyrian Cupbearer with Fan

It is interesting in this connection to recall the great care taken in the preparation of medicine for England's royal household that it may not be tampered with. When a prescription is brought by a royal messenger to one of the royal dispensers—there are several—the dispenser takes the date and time of its receipt and then passes into a private room where all the glass cupboards that contain drugs are securely locked. A writer in *Tit-Bits* describes the precautions then observed. After the prescription has been entered in a book—each member of the royal family has his or her prescription book, which is provided with a lock and kept in a safe—the work of dispensing is done by the dispenser and his assistant. The cupboards are unlocked and the drugs wanted brought out and placed on a table. Each drug before being used is analyzed, and the necessary quantities weighed and measured on two or three different pairs of scales to ensure exactness. The water used is of the highest state of purity, and every possible care is taken to keep it in that state while the medicine is being made up. When the medicine is finally bottled the names and quantities of every ingredient are placed on the label, together with directions as to taking written in English and Latin. The bottle, after being corked and sealed, is placed in a strong case, which is locked. This case has two keys, one being retained by the dispenser and the other being in the possession of the royal personage for whom the medicine is intended. A trusted royal servant or a king's messenger conveys the case and its contents to the royal residence, where it is unlocked and the bottle of medicine examined and the particulars upon the label checked by the royal physician in attendance.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the chapters of the Book of Ezra that follow last Sunday's lesson the events of a year at Jerusalem (compare 7.9 and 10.17) are recorded, when Ezra compelled the Jews to put away their heathen wives. Thirteen years intervene between that time and the beginning of Nehemiah's memoirs in the Book of Nehemiah.

The same king, Artaxerxes Longimanus, is on the Persian throne, and it is now the year 445 B. C. A rebellion of Egypt has been suppressed, but Megabyzos, the satrap of Syria, has been defiant and has succeeded in gaining a measure of independence. Grave disasters have meantime befallen the Jews at Jerusalem. Ezra's reforms would arouse the hatred of the foreign nations whose daughters had been treated with scorn, and they had made breaches in the city's walls. This is the natural inference from the Book of Ezra which accounts for the sad plight of the city as reported to Nehemiah by his brother Hanani.

It is strange that Nehemiah does not mention Ezra's work in connection with his account of the rebuilding of the walls. Yet neither Ezra's nor Nehemiah's records are complete. Many scholars think that the 27th instead of the 7th year of Artaxerxes was the date of Ezra's expedition and institution of the Law—between Nehemiah's two visits in 445 and 432 B. C.—and that on Nehemiah's arrival the walls were just as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B. C.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Shushan is Susa, the magnificent city in the province of Elam which was made by Cyrus one of the capitals of the Persian Empire and was the royal winter residence. See page 53. The map on page 392 shows the size of the Persian province of Judah at this time.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

You can tell your pupils nearly the whole story in dialogue form. Describe first Nehemiah's life in the beautiful Persian palace, his care for the king's life; then tell of the coming of his brother Hanani, his eager questions and Hanani's sorrowful answers; next picture Nehemiah in his grief over the sad news and give his prayer in simple language; the dialogue between the king and his cupbearer and the way in which God let Nehemiah answer his own prayer will complete the story. Follow with a talk about prayer; call it talking with God, and teach your pupils to bring all their troubles to God, and to pray for others as well as themselves. Because God is their Father He will listen, because He is a wise Father, He will answer their prayer in the way it is best for them.

THE APPROACH TO THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. What day was last Thursday? Why do we keep the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day? The day carries our thoughts back to Governor Bradford and the early perils of the Pilgrims, and then on through the Revolutionary and Civil Wars to the present period of peace and prosperity, and then onward still to the years of greatness for our country that are yet to come. Each year the President of the United States and the Governors of the States issue their thanksgiving proclamations weighted with devout words acknowledging the nation's debt to the divine Ruler of all, and on Thanksgiving Day prayers of gratitude and praise are offered in the churches throughout our land for the way in which the Lord has led us. To-day we study a prayer offered by a great man more than twenty-three centuries ago, at a time when his nation was in distress and especially needed divine help. But it fails not to voice the nation's debt to God in the past, addressing Him as the God that keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love Him and keep His comamndments, and calling the people those whom God had redeemed by His great power and His strong hand.

For Older Pupils. What is patriotism? Mention four great patriots of our country. Who was back of the Declaration of Independence? Who was back of the Emancipation Proclamation? These great crises in our nation's history show forth the patriotism burning in her great heroes. It is easy to show one's patriotism when it can be done by merely shouting her praises; it is quite another matter when it means suffering for some great cause. Nehemiah was a great patriot. Neither he nor his father nor his grandfather had ever seen his own land; he was enjoying a place of honor and influence in a foreign court; yet so glowing was his patriotism that he was eager to sacrifice everything in order to see and serve his loved Jerusalem.

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Prayer Perfect

Nehemiah's Prayer. Next Sunday we see Nehemiah as the man of action: this Sunday we see him as the man of prayer. And these two sides of his nature mark the perfection of his character.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, says our Golden Text, or as it is translated in the Revised Version, the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. One condition of prayer that avails much is that it must be the earnest desire of the one who prays. Oft-times prayer is offered for what, if granted, would be most unwelcome. John Knox prayed, "O God, give me Scotland or I die," and God gave him Scotland. Nehemiah prayed in effect, O God, give me Jerusalem or I die, and God gave him Jerusalem.

Hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, said Nehemiah. We go to a friend intending to tell him something, but we find him in a mood wholly at variance with ours; we know that our communication will receive slight attention under the circumstances and we decide to wait a more fitting season. How common an experience is this! Not so is it in our messages to God. All times and all seasons are alike with Him, and His ear is ever attentive to our cry.

Nehemiah's appeal is to the God who keeps His promises and is abundant in mercies; it confesses the sins of the people and his own, and acknowledges their debt of gratitude to God, and it is a prayer for others whose burdens hang heavy on his heart, so heavy that he would sacrifice his position at court to go to their relief, and therefore he asks God to prosper him in his purpose.

His prayer was for others. In a recent address in this country, Dr. Jowett emphasized the thought that Christ said, When ye pray say, "*our* Father, not *my* Father. There are times when the personal cry of sorrow obtrudes the plural need, but there can be no real prayer when the singular is used rather than the plural, he said. It had been his temptation to pray in a narrow circle, for the same things in that same circle with no thought for the vast need of humanity, but now he tries to think himself into the sorrows and burdens of others that he may help them. When he asked his little daughter to think of some one for whom she had never prayed, she answered, "the policeman." "I had been preaching twenty years, and had never thought to pray for the policeman," said Dr. Jowett, as he asked each one in his large audience not to go to sleep that night until he had given a plural prayer for some one for whom he had never before prayed.

Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. From the record that follows, we know that this man was the king, that the mercy Nehemiah wished was the king's favor and permission to go to the aid of his fellow countrymen in Jerusalem, and the prosperity he besought for himself was success in the undertaking he had in mind. His prayer is most indefinite in words, yet most definite to himself and to God in meaning. Did not Christ tell us that our heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask Him? How more real a thing, sometimes, is communion with God than communion with man! We talk to one another and the very words we use ofttimes hide our actual meaning, but in our talks with God, thought need not be expressed in words, or may be very poorly expressed, yet our meaning is understood, for there spirit meets with Spirit.

Nehemiah had been Regular to Prayer Drill. During the Revolutionary War a British private was discovered stealing out of camp every night and hastening to the adjoining woods. He was arrested and charged with having secret conference with the enemy, and was about to be sentenced to death, so sure were his officers of his errand, when he begged for his life, declaring that he went there only to be alone in prayer. "Down on your knees then and pray now: you never needed it more in your life," said the stern captain. The man knelt and poured out his soul in prayer. "Let him go!" called the old captain; "a man couldn't pray like that unless he'd been regular to gospel drill." Nor could Nehemiah have prayed his beautiful prayer unless he had been in the habit of pouring out his soul in communion with God.

The Power of Prayer for Others. In a sermon preached in England, Mr. A. L. Kemp related this effect of the prayer of a little child for a cab driver friend. One day the man crept quietly up the stairs to his little friend's room and heard these words as he neared the door: "Oh, Father, do not let him be drunken any more; he is so good and kind and I love him." The man knelt at the bedside on his knees and said to the lad through his tears, "Were you praying for a waif like me?" "Yes," said the boy, "I always do that. You're no waif, you're a man." And the man never forgot that night and that prayer; in the crowded streets, piloting his cab through the city, the words, winged with love, rang in his ears like joy bells, "You're no waif: you're a man," till the refrain made him stand true, borne into manhood through a child's simple prayer.

The League of Prayer we need in Our Land. In England there is a Teachers' League of Prayer, whose members sign this pledge: I promise to unite

in private prayer for the work of Sunday Schools and my own class in particular, every Sunday morning as opportunity occurs for quietude with God.

II Others' Burdens

Whatever concerns our Fellow-men, concerns Us. Moses in his high position at the court of Pharaoh might lightly have said that he could do nothing for his brethren toiling at their forced labors under the lash of the taskmaster. As an Egyptian he could do nothing to lighten their burdens, and he might have spoken a few words of sympathy to them, and then have gone his own way, congratulating himself that he had escaped their hard lot. The only way in which he could bear their burdens was to make himself one of them, to suffer with them, to use his higher wisdom for them as their leader.

The little Hebrew maid in the house of the great Syrian general might have said that in her lowly position as servant she could do nothing to help her master. Surely she had no call to bear his burdens! But she was the only one in all that realm that could send the great Syrian to the prophet in Israel to be cured of his leprosy.

Nehemiah at the Persian court might have felt no obligation resting upon him to go to the help of people he did not know in a far-distant land he had never seen. Yet he was the one whom God chose to bear the burdens of his weaker brethren.

Each one owes something to others. Each one has a duty of lightening the burden of some one else. We are our brother's keeper, and our brother is the one in need whom it is in our power to help. "Whatever concerns our fellowmen, in any quarter of the world, concerns us," Dr. Hillis emphasizes. "The sorrows of women and little children are become our sorrows. The moan of a child in the distant South Sea Islands is a sob in our ear that forbids rest and sleep. The strong nations are lifting their shields about the weak ones. They are determined to end the slave driver in Central Africa, and the reign of the despot and fiend in whatsoever quarter of the earth. There are no foreign zones of influence any longer. The world has become one through its sympathy and the waxing sense of justice. And this new world consciousness of suffering prophesies the coming triumph of the teaching of Christ."

Bear ye one Anothers' Burdens. In the legend of Siddartha, which Edwin Arnold has turned into beautiful poetry, the story goes that the Prince was kept carefully in his palace, and from all knowledge of woe and pain. He should never know that there were tears, that there was sickness, that there was death. But the very wind brought him the story of the world's woes; his quick ear heard their music on the Aeolian harp, and they sang to him a wail, and so he got his first knowledge of human sorrow. He wanted to enjoy and see the world, and his father issued a decree that all things that give offense or pain should be cleared from his path. But somehow it happened that one poor, wretched, miserable, palsy-stricken, blind beggar had been left by the wayside; the Prince saw him, looked at him, and turning to his attendants said, "What, are there such sights as this, such sounds as this, such men as this in the world? I will turn back and think of it." And he went out again, and again the path had been cleared for him that he should see no pain. But as he went, one suddenly fell down struck by mortal disease, and he saw the anguish and death. Then farther on he saw a funeral procession and a corpse borne to its burial, and he turned to his attendants and said, "What, do all men know sickness? Are all men finally borne to their death? Do heart-throbs come into all hearts? Do tears come into all eyes?" And he said, "I cannot live in joy while my fellow-creatures are living in suffering." And from all the strong attractions of his home, he went forth that he might study the problem of human suffering, that he might put his own shoulder under the burden that was bearing down on all the human race. *Lyman Abbott,* in *The Signs of Promise.*

III Applied Truth

Do the Good you meditate.

"A million castles in the air,
When set upon the scales,
One small, plain deed to balance there,
Will always, always fail!"

How easy it would have been for Nehemiah to build castles in the air about what he would do for Jerusalem if he only were not so many hundred miles away, or if it were any part of his business to concern himself about his distant kindred, or if he could easily go to Jerusalem, as could one who was not cupbearer to the king and an important man in the Persian court life! But Nehemiah was no idle dreamer, and no easy excuse maker; with him to see the need was to set about doing something for it.

Between the knowing what should be done and the doing of it there is, alas! too often a great gulf never bridged. Mere knowing about others' needs or mere expression of regret at their needs does not avail; the true philanthropist is one who knows and sympathizes and does. Do the good you meditate, says Horace Bushnell, or if you never find the time for doing it, have the frankness to confess that your good intentions are hollow and worthless.

Knowing and Proving the Power of Prayer. Such a lesson as this brings forcibly to our minds the need, value and power of prayer. We know that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. But do we put this knowledge into use? Are we men and women, boys and girls, of prayer? Said Dr. R. A. Torrey in a recent talk about prayer: You sit and listen; you smile, you bow your head and mentally you say, "Amen." But that is not what we want. We want you to go away not merely saying, "I believe that." We want you to go away, perhaps saying nothing, but when you get home get down before God and give yourself up to be a man of prayer—a woman of prayer.

Missionary Knowledge and Missionary Activity. If our Young People's Society is not doing anything, we may be sure that its songs and testimonies are of little consequence to God. If the faith that we profess is real, it will express itself in missionary activity, in the effort to make Christ better known and to have Him more honored in our own community, to make our own country more truly Christian and to carry the Gospel to all the people of non-Christian lands.

One of the strange things confronting us to-day is the immense increase of missionary interest without proportionate increase of missionary gifts. Missionary books are read as never before. Great conventions are held where the enthusiasm is deep and evidently genuine. But where is the evidence of the reality of all this interest, in actual gifts of money and life?

How much has our society given to home and foreign missions the past year? What would this mean per member? Have we averaged ten cents per member, or ten cents per month per member? Could we not, by systematic and proportionate giving, easily double our offerings this year? If some of us do not regularly receive any money, then we can set to work to earn some for missions. Let us name the amount we will try to earn, and at once set about devising ways of earning it. *Robert E. Speer.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

"Daily prayers lessen daily cares."

Intercession is love at prayer. *J. E. McFadyen.*

He that prayeth for another is heard for himself. *Jewish Saying.*

Where can comfort spring
When prayer is of no avail? *Wordsworth.*

The first condition of sympathy is knowledge, and the second is attending to what we do know. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Do not seek to render God the protector of your self-love and ambition, but the promoter of your good desires. *Fénelon.*

If you want to do people good you can, but you must pay the price for it. *Maclaren.*

I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Lk. 11.9.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Lord, teach us to pray. As Dr. George Matheson prayed, so should we:

"Make my prayer from beginning to end a duet. Let it ever have two voices—my brother's and mine."

> "God answers sharp and sudden on some prayers,
> And thrusts the thing we prayed for in our face,
> A gauntlet with a gift in't,"

the poet Browning truly says. Are we ready like Nehemiah to accept the challenge and the opportunity to answer our own prayer?

Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

In the year 445 B. C., Nehemiah, a Jew, was cup-bearer to Artaxerxes king of Persia. His brother Hanani and other Jews came to him at the palace in Susa and told him of the distressing condition at Jerusalem; how times were hard, and the people in trouble because of poor crops and persistent enemies, and how the walls of the Holy City were broken down and the gates burned and the temple neglected. Nehemiah wept on hearing this, and fasted and prayed. "O God," he cried, "I beseech Thee, hearken unto the prayer of Thy servant." And after acknowledging God's covenant keeping and lovingkindness, he poured out his grief and trouble, confessing the sins of the people and of himself, in not keeping God's laws, and recalling the divine promise that though they should be scattered if they trespassed, yet if they returned to God and kept His commandments, He would restore them to His holy City. They could all claim that promise, for they were His servants, His people, who delighted to fear His name. And then Nehemiah besought God's blessing upon the purpose he had in his heart and the furthering of his design by granting him mercy with the king.

Opportunity to make known his desire to the king came a few months later, when Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah the cause of his sadness. How could he be glad, Nehemiah replied, when his own city of Jerusalem was in so sorry a plight? "What is your wish?" the king further questioned, and Nehemiah boldly asked to be sent to rebuild the city walls. The king granted him leave of absence for this purpose, appointing him governor of Jerusalem and giving him credentials and passports and letters to his officials and an order on Asaph, the keeper of his forest, for timber. Accompanied by a military escort he set out on his mission.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What can the patriot of to-day do for his country?
2. Love of ease and love of service.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read chapters 2-7. 2. What was the first thing that Nehemiah did on reaching Jerusalem? (Neh. 2.11-15.) 3. What is said in 2 K. 25.9, 10 about the destruction of the city and walls by Nebuchadnezzar's army? 4. On whom did Nehemiah rely? (Neh. 2.20.) 5. Who were the Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites? (Clipping, page 450.) 6. How long did it take to build up the walls? (Neh. 6.15.)

Questions to think about. 1. The people mentioned in the 7th verse were enemies; what motive had made them friendly? 2. Why did the Samaritans object to the rebuilding of the walls? 3. How many and what discouragements did Nehemiah have to meet? Were they enough to cause most men to give up the effort? 4. Which was the harder to endure, the threats of the enemy or the disheartening words of the friends? 5. What qualities of leadership did Nehemiah show? 6. What was there religious about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem? 7. Can our national work of cutting the canal across the Isthmus be regarded in the light of a patriotic duty? 8. What work is needed in your Sunday-school that you can do? Have you a mind to do it?

Note-book Work. In your Book of Israel during and after the Exile write Part I of Nehemiah's Work, calling it The Man of Prayer.

LESSON X—DECEMBER 3

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

Golden Text

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 1 Cor. 16.13.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Neh. 4.1-23. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem. **T.** Neh. 2.9-20. Nehemiah's Proposal to Rebuild. **W.** Neh. 3.1-32. The Method of Rebuilding. **T.** Neh. 5.1-19. The Cry of the Poorer People. **F.** Josh. 1.1-9. An Exhortation to be of Good Courage. **S.** 2 Sam. 10. 6-14. Determining to Play the Man. **S.** Rom. 8.26-39. "If God is for us, who is against us?" *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Neh. 4 PRINT vv. 6-18 COMMIT vv. 16, 17

6 So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half *the height* thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; 8 and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. 9 But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. 11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12 And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us. 13 Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set *there* the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; 18 and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

6. *So we built the wall.* See Ezra 5.2.—*Unto half the height thereof.* "The most ancient wall, the foundations of which were discovered by Sir Charles Warren, must have had a height of two hundred feet" (*Ryle*)! "Half-way through is just the critical time in all protracted work. The fervor of beginning has passed; the animation from seeing the end at hand has not sprung up" (*Maclaren*).—*A mind.* "Literally, heart" (*Ryle*).

7. *Sanballat.* The governor of Samaria according to papyri that have been discovered.—*Arabians, Ammonites, Ashdodites.* See the Geographical Background. "Common hatred has a wonderful power of uniting former foes"

(*Maclaren*).—*The repairing of the walls went forward.* Heb. *healing went up upon the walls,* RVm.

10. *Judah.* The people of Judah.—*Bearers of burdens.* Those who cleared away the rubbish.—*Much rubbish.* See verse 2.

12. *Dwelt by them.* By the adversaries, v. 11.—*Ten times.* Many times.—*From all places.* The literal interpretation of the RVm—*From all places whence ye shall return they will be upon us*—is meaningless. Evidently the Jews who lived in the neighborhood of the enemies and had just come to Jerusalem wished to have their townsmen who were helping in the rebuilding of the wall return and defend their own homes.

13. *Therefore.* Forewarned, forearmed.

14. *I looked.* This may mean that he looked about, inspecting the defense, or that he saw in the distance the approach of the enemy and counseled fearless fight, which was not necessary because the enemy retreated, as we infer from the next verse.—*Rulers.* Or, *deputies,* RVm.—*Be not afraid, remember the Lord.* "The only real antagonist of fear is faith" (*Maclaren*).

15. *It was known unto us.* Their plan for a sudden attack, verse 11.

16. *Half of my servants.* These were probably Nehemiah's bodyguard.—*All the house of Judah.* Or, *all the house of Judah that builded the wall,* RVm.

17. *They that bare burdens.* These must have been the removers of rubbish; representations on Assyrian monuments show that in this age the heavy blocks were brought into position by means of rollers and pulleys.

18. *The builders.* They needed both hands for the work of laying the stones. —*Every one had his sword girded by his side.* "As a few years ago I saw Circassian immigrants building their houses from the ruins of Amman under fear of an Arab attack" (*G. A. Smith*).—*He that sounded the trumpet.* The alarm-call in case of attack.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

Blowing the Trumpet

Neh. 3.28. *Over against his own house.* This is the principle that goes a long way to solve the problem of how to sweeten the foul life of our modern cities. Most of us are so familiar with the evils that stare us in the face every time we go out upon the pavements, that we have come to think of them as being inseparable from our modern life, like the noise of a carriage wheel from its rotation. And is it so then? Is it indeed inevitable that within a stone's throw of our churches there should be thousands of men and women that have no more religion than a horse? Can it not be helped that there should be streets in our cities into which it is unfit for a decent woman to go by day alone, and unsafe for a brave man to venture after night fall? Must men and women huddle together in dens where decency is impossible? Is it an indispensable part of our material progress and wonderful civilization that vice and crime and utter irreligion and hopeless squalor should go with it?

The beginning of Nehemiah's work of repair was that sad midnight ride round the ruined walls. So there is a solemn obligation laid on Christian people to acquaint themselves with the awful facts, and then meditate on them, till sacred, Christ-like compassion, pressing against the flood-gates of the heart, flings them open, and lets out a stream of helpful pity and saving deeds. *Alexander Maclaren,* in *The Book of Nehemiah.*

4.3. *If a fox go up he shall break down their stone wall.* He who has swerved from a course he knows is right, through fear of ridicule, taunts, sneers or sarcasm of those around him, is not a man self-directed by right; he is only a weak puppet pulled by the strings of manipulation in the hands of others. He is a figure in a moral Punch and Judy show—without its entertaining quality. *Wm. George Jordan,* in *The Crown of Individuality.*

6. *So we built the wall.* He was a man of good and righteous character, and very ambitious to make his own nation happy; and he hath left the walls of Jerusalem as an eternal monument of himself. *Josephus.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

16. *The coats of Mail.* They probably consisted of metallic scales rounded at the bottom and squared at the top, and sewed on linen or felt. On a bas-relief at Nineveh are seen warriors with coats of scale armor which descend to the knees or ankles. In one of the palaces Layard discovered a number of scales used for this armor. Each scale was of iron two or three inches long, rounded at one end and squared at the other, with a raised or embossed line in the centre, and some were inlaid with copper. At a later period the Assyrian armor was made of smaller scales, which were pointed and ornamented with raised figures, and the coat of mail reached no lower than the waist. *J. M. Freeman* in *Bible Manners and customs.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nehemiah began his mission in Jerusalem with great caution. After he had rested three days, before telling any one what God had put into his heart to do for Jerusalem, he rode forth in the dead of night to view the city walls that were broken down and the gates that were burned that he might understand all the difficulties of the task that confronted him. Next he summoned the leaders of the people and told them of the God-given purpose that had brought him to the city and of the authority given him by the Persian king, and urged them to undertake the work of rebuilding the wall. He received ready response: "Let us rise up and build."

The Jews "Wailing Place" in the Western Wall Enclosing the Temple Area

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Sanballat was a Horonite, that is, his home was at Beth-horon, a town in Samaria. "The Arabians" may refer to those dwelling in the desert south of Judah, but more probably to the descendants of those whom Sargon established in Samaria after the exile of the people of the Northern Kingdom in 715 B. C. The Ammonites were the inhabitants of the country east of the Jordan between the Jabbok and the Arnon. The Ashdodites were the inhabitants of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistine plain, due west of Jerusalem near the sea. Jerusalem was surrounded by foes: on the north the half-heathen Samaritans, on the east the Ammonites, on the south—in possession even of Hebron—the Edomites and Arabians, and on the west the Philistines.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Tell your pupils the story of the engines. Do you recall it? How the man who had a large train load of toys to be taken up a steep grade went into the engine-house to pick out an engine to haul it, and how all the great engines chorused: "Been-out-all-day, Been-out-all-day, Been-out-all-day"—all save one little engine who said: "Take-me, Take-me, Take-me"? So the little engine puffed sturdily up grade, but it was a long, hard pull. When almost exhausted it kept saying over and over, "Think-I-can-do-it, think-I-can-do-it, think-I-can-do-it." At last the top of the hill was reached, and as it went merrily down again on the other side it cried, "Thought-I-could, thought-I-could, thought-I-

could." The little engine was not afraid of work; it thought it could do the work, although it was tired and the load was hard and the road was long and steep, and so it did do it. These are the lessons for your pupils in the story of to-day. Some one has well said that the instinct for work is a more important security of a child's future than the inheritance of a fortune. To awaken that and to implant the resolution in your pupils' minds not to give up to discouragements, as illustrated by the two children by the seashore, page 453, is your opportunity. The lesson story itself is intensely interesting. It includes Nehemiah's night ride.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Humphrey Corners was not a very pleasant place in which to live, because it was not kept clean. One great eyesore of the place was a vacant lot, directly opposite the church, where old rubbish, bottles, tin cans, broken crockery, old shoes, etc., were thrown. But one day Lorna Conree had a real inspiration, and that very afternoon called a meeting of all the boys and girls, and the idea that she laid before them was so unusual that it "took" at once. The next morning every boy was at the dump almost before light. They wheeled soil from a vacant lot near by and threw it here and there on the refuse heap, and then they dug up the hard earth around the edges. The next morning it was the girls who slipped out of their beds before others in the families were awake. They brought seeds and threw them by handfuls over the pile and planted them in the earth that the boys had dug up. Then they waited. At first no one but the boys and girls noticed that the seeds were pushing their way through the earth, but at last the little plants began to climb over the pile and the secret was out: somebody had been planting nasturtiums.

The next Sunday the minister's text was "Over against his own House." "I think the children have set us older folk an example which we must follow," he said. "Like the people of Nehemiah's day all the children had a mind to work, and they covered the disagreeable and unpleasant things with beauty. We, too, must work in the dirt and work hard. Let us every one get right to work over against his own house and make this a clean town." And they did.

The minister's text (the account is condensed from a story by Bertha Burnham Bartlett in the *Sunday-School Times*) was taken from the third chapter of Nehemiah, which gives details of the work on Jerusalem's walls that Nehemiah began soon after reaching the city. Who had made him governor there? How had he come to Jerusalem? What was the first thing he did after resting three days? Why?

For Older Pupils. From whatever direction you approach Jerusalem, writes a recent visitor to the Holy City, whether you ride up from the southwest across the valley of Hinnom, and the first view of the ancient capital that bursts upon you is of those massive towers and the long battlemental rampart crowning the heights of Mount Zion; or whether, approaching from the north, you draw near to the beautiful Damascus Gate, with the long stretch of wall running over the hill and out of sight to the right hand and the left; or, looking down from the east, from the Mount of Olives, upon the old temple area, you see its fortification towering at a dizzy height above the Kidron Valley; always a chief part of the impression which the city makes upon you will come from this massive circuit of its wall. What had been Nehemiah's ambition as regards that wall? How had it looked when he took his midnight ride around it?

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I A Mind to Work

Working with a Will. How those people did work on those walls! To be sure, they were badly discouraged when the walls were half-way up. Their strength was about gone, they said, and there was much rubbish. There could not have been half as much rubbish as when they began the work, but things always seem worse when one is tired and discouraged. They flatly said that they were not able to build further, but Nehemiah was able to put heart into them again, and in a very short time, despite all the opposition of their enemies,

the walls were completed. Some carried away the rubbish, others brought the stone, others laid one stone upon the other, and yet others guarded the workmen, and by united, persistent work the task was accomplished.

The secret of it all was that they had a mind to work. Work is only done well when it is done with a will, Ruskin tells us, and we all know the fact from our own experience.

Afraid of Work. "What ails that horse, that he stops so often? Is he balky?" a visitor asked a farmer. "No," the farmer answered, "he's all right. It's simply that he's so afraid somebody will say 'Whoa!' and he won't hear it, that he stops to listen!" Do you know anyone like that horse; anyone who is afraid of work? Is he a success? Is he doing his share of the world's work or getting his share of the world's reward? Is he one of those of whom Isaac Watts speaks in this verse, which you will not find in any church hymnal:

There are a number of us creep
Into the world to eat and sleep;
And know no reason why we're born,
But only to consume the corn,
Devour the cattle, flesh, and fish,
And leave behind an empty dish.
And if our tombstones, when we die,
Be not taught to flatter and to lie,
There's nothing better can be said
Than that he's eaten up all his bread,
Drunk up his drink and gone to bed.

The Dignity of Work. On one day of the year the Emperor and Empress of China show their appreciation of the dignity of work by directing the plow and working the loom. Honest work is honorable work, of whatever sort it may be. No true man or woman is ever ashamed of honest work. When an expert in genealogy tried to convince President Lincoln that he came from distinguished ancestors he listened with amused interest, but when that expert wished to devise a coat of arms for him, Lincoln asked: "How would a pair of shirt sleeves do? Most of my ancestors did their work with their coats off."

Mr. Julius Kruttschnitt is one of the great railroad men of our country, a chief officer of the Southern Pacific Railway system. In the early eighties he was superintendent on a division of a railroad near New Orleans when a washout occurred. Mr. Collis P. Huntington's special car was halted by the washout, and the owner went out to view the scene. "Where's the superintendent?" he asked. "There he is," was the answer, "there, up to his waist in the water." Mr. Huntington looked in the direction his informant pointed, and there saw the superintendent right in the midst of the turmoil, giving directions and taking a hand when things did not move fast enough to suit him. "Humph, there's one man who isn't afraid of his job," Mr. Huntington remarked. When he reached his office he had Mr. Kruttschnitt promoted, and promotions have come often since to this man, who is not afraid of his job whatever it is.

Work is Gods' Gift.

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle; face it; 'tis God's gift. *Maltbie D. Babcock.*

II Refusing to be Discouraged

The Time to come out Strong. "Now, Mr. Tapley," said Mark (in Dickens' story), giving himself a tremendous blow in the chest by way of reviver, "just you attend to what I've got to say. Things is looking about as bad as they can look, young man. You'll not have such another opportunity for showing your jolly disposition, my fine fellow, as long as you live; and therefore, Tapley, now's your time to come out strong, or never!"

Things were seemingly looking about as bad as they could look when the walls about Jerusalem had reached half their destined height. There was trouble within and without. The workers were discouraged, so weary and so fainthearted that they declared they were not able to build any more of the wall.

Their helpers, the Jews who had come from more distant places, received disheartening news from the men of their home towns, who came to them and kept saying over and over, "This work can't go on, it cannot; you must return with us and defend your own homes." And they knew that their enemies were planning a sudden attack and were confident of victory. Now was Nehemiah's time for coming out strong, and he did. He refused to be discouraged. He put heart into his people. "Be not ye afraid of them," he cried: "Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight." And by his own indomitable will Nehemiah triumphed; he won the victory over the discouraged workers, the discouraging friends, and the distressing foes, and soon he could report: "We returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work." One resolute man had come out "strong" and had outgeneraled the multitude.

Tackle the Trouble. For the great majority of people an obstacle is something to stop one's progress. For the resolute few it is a stepping-stone to one's goal. I find nothing so singular in life as this, Hawthorne truly observes, that everything opposing appears to lose its substance the moment one actually grapples with it. When you find an obstacle in your way, ask yourselves what you shall say to these questions of Edmund Vance Cook:

Did you tackle the trouble that came your way
With a resolute heart and cheerful?
Or hide your face from the light of day
With a craven soul and fearful?

Oh, a trouble's a ton, or a trouble's an ounce,
Or a trouble's what you make it,
And it isn't the fact that your hurt that counts,
But only how did you take it?

Made of the Right Spirit. In a recent address, Miss Slattery told how she had watched two little children who were busily engaged in building a house with a high wall around it on the sand by the seashore. The tide was coming in: suddenly a wave dashed over the wall, and they looked at each other in astonishment; then came another wave that completely destroyed house and wall and all. She expected the little folks would begin to cry, but no, they gazed long and silently at the ruin and then one little fellow said, "Come, let's build another one somewhere else," and the other one answered, "Let's."

III Quit you like Men; be Strong

Be Strong. At this writing a fight between a white man and a negro is being held, and all over our country men are betting on which has the greater brute force. Paul was not thinking of that sort of strength, not of any sort of physical strength, when he wrote the words of our Golden Text. His thought was that voiced by Browning when he speaks of

A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

Such a man was Nehemiah, whose unfaltering faith in God and persistent prayer for divine help were back of his equally persistent activity and equally unfaltering zeal in his work. He was a man who "did things." Cautious and prudent in planning; wise and patient in dealing with men; cool, resolute and prompt in acting, he brought to a successful ending an enterprise whose difficulties would have staggered smaller men.

The words of an editorial in the *Homiletic Review* give viewpoints of men who show themselves strong: The Peary achievement is the climax and coronation of polar enterprise. What of it? Its chief value will be found to lie, not in adding new names to the beaded thread of artic research; nor in any large contribution to the cause of science; but rather in the deed itself, in the quality of the accomplishment, in the spirit of enterprise, of daring, of endurance, that attest man's sovereignty over nature, his quenchless "thirst for the horizon," and his supreme satisfaction in the triumph of his powers. Polar enterprise is more a moral dynamic than a material utility...Nowhere has this spirit of enterprise a mightier lure or a nobler sphere than in the domain of

the Christian life and work. The call is for deed, for achievement, for accomplishing things, for "reaching the pole" of the end sought. The "great nail" as the Eskimos call the pole, is the "nail driven in a sure place." The world wants theories that will work, men who do things, such quintessence of experience and qualities of the masterful explorer as finds Christ, the axis of the universe, that plants His flag at the meeting-place of meridians, and that carries this old world into the reign of righteousness. To do this will mean hardiness, persistency, the Peary spirit that may fail seven times, to succeed the eighth, and that is the passion of life.

The Call.

Quit you like men, be strong;
There's a burden to bear,
There's a grief to share
There's a heart that breaks 'neath a load of care—
But fare ye forth with a song.

Quit you like men, be strong;
There's a work to do
There's a world to make new,
There's a call for men who are brave and true—
On! on with a song!

Quit you like men, be strong;
There's a year of grace,
There's a God to face,
There's another heat in the great world race—
Speed! speed with a song. *William Herbert Hudnut.*

One who quit himself like a Man. When Dwight L. Moody was in Bristol, he heard a famous English preacher say to his congregation: "The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." "He said 'a man'", thought Mr. Moody; "he did not say a great man, nor a wise man, nor an eloquent man, nor a smart man, but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man." How he fulfilled his resolution, and how God blessed his work, all the world knows.

Robert Louis Stevenson's Prayer. The day returns and brings us the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. Help us to play the man, help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces...Help us with the grace of courage, that we be none of us cast down when we sit lamenting amid the ruins of our happiness or our integrity; touch us with the fire of Thy altar, that we may be up and doing to rebuild our city.

SENTENCE SERMONS

Watch and pray, Mt. 26.41.

Don't you know that the harder you are at work the happier you are? *Dickens.*

As a rule, they who enter into a conflict despising their adversaries come out of it despising themselves. *Joseph Bush.*

It is curious to see how the space clears around a man of decisive spirit and leaves him room and freedom. *John Foster.*

The true way to meet opposition is twofold—prayer and prudent watchfulness. *Alexander Maclaren.*

Brace up to play the man under afflictions. *Robert Louis Stevenson.*

Wonderful is the strengthening power of the obstacle. *James Buckham.*

O friends, be men; so act that none may feel
Ashamed to meet the eyes of other men. *Homer's Iliad.*

Enthusiasm for social progress, business talent, power of organization, capacity to deal with practical affairs, even financial genius, all those very attributes most highly developed to-day, should be offered in greater degree than they are for the service of the Church. *Hugh Black.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

Let me but do my work from day to day,
In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
In roaring market-place or tranquil room.
Let me but find it in my heart to say,
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray—
"This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Of all who live, I am the one by whom
This work can best be done in the right way." *Henry van Dyke.*

You know that a kite never rises with the wind but always against it. Be like the kite when obstacles and hindrances and discouragements of all sorts beset your pathway to a worthy goal.

Nehemiah conducted business as a work for God. The hand of God was upon him and prospered him, he says. So may we recognize God in our daily occupations and do them as for Him.

One of Nehemiah's great assets in this work was his enthusiasm for the work. Is there one of us who does not need to catch his spirit?

THE FIRST PART OF THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

Nehemiah skilfully directed the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. Around the wall, wherever it was broken down, every one over against his own house, he distributed forty or more groups of workers from Jerusalem and near-by cities, priests and merchants, apothecaries and goldsmiths, nobles and artisans. All worked with zeal—"they strengthened their hands for the good work."

At first the enemies of the Jews, Sanballat and Tobiah, ridiculed the work. "What are these feeble Jews up to?" mockingly questioned Sanballat before his brethren and the army of Samaria. "Do they think they can do it all in a day? Do they expect to bring the stones to life out of these heaps of rubbish?" And Tobiah joined in the ridicule. "That stone wall which they are building," he said, "will be broken down if a fox tries to scale it." Their words were repeated to Nehemiah, and he appealed to God to judge them. Meanwhile the building went on and the wall was now half way up, for the people had a mind to work.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Division of labor. 2. Working "over against one's own house." See Dr. Maclaren's words, page 449. 3. Protection of workers. 4. Qualities of a great leader.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. With what trouble among his people did Nehemiah have to contend? (Neh. 5.) 2. Where was the plain of Ono? (Clipping, page 458.) 3. Who was the king of Persia at this time? 4. In Oriental usage, what did the sending of an open letter mean? (Clipping, page 458.) 5. Why could not Nehemiah lawfully enter the temple? (Num. 18.7.) 6. How long did it take to build the wall? (Neh. 6.15.)

Questions to think about. 1. What was Sanballat's object in seeking to get Nehemiah to the plain of Ono? 2. Why did Sanballat send the same message four times? 3. What was his object in sending an open, that is, unsealed, letter? 4. What words of the Jews to Pilate that determined him to put Jesus to death are recalled by the words of Nehemiah's enemies in verse 7? (Jn. 19.12.) 5. Was there danger that if the report reached Artaxerxes regarding the treachery of his former cupbearer, he would believe it? (Clipping, page 457.) 6. What causes could have "shut up" Shemaiah? (Clipping, page 457.) 7. What did Nehemiah mean by saying, "Should such a man as I flee?" 8. What did he mean by "being such as I," verse 11? 9. Learn the distinction as to the meanings of self-respect, self-conceit, vanity and pride.

Note-book Work. In your Book of Israel during and after the Exile, write Part II of Nehemiah's Work, calling it The Man of Action.

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 10

NEHEMIAH AND HIS ENEMIES

Golden Text

**The Lord is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid? Ps. 27.1.**

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Neh. 6.1-19. Nehemiah and his Enemies. **T.** Ps. 27.1-14. The Lord is my Salvation, whom shall I Fear? **W.** Ps. 62.1-12. God is the Rock of my Strength. **T.** Ps. 118.1-29. "It is better to Take Refuge in the Lord." **F.** Eph. 6.10-20. "Be Strong in the Lord." **S.** 1 Cor. 16.1-13. Watch ye, quit you like Men. **S.** 2 Tim. 2.1-13. Suffer Hardship as a Good Soldier. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Neh. 6 PRINT vv. 1-12 COMMIT v. 11

1 Now it came to pass, when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and unto the rest of our enemies, that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though even unto that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me saying, Come, let us meet together in *one of* the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 And they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. 5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand, 6 wherein was written, It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou art building the wall: and thou wouldest be their king, according to these words. 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. 9 For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. But now, *O God,* strengthen thou my hands.

10 And I went unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. 11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12 And I discerned, and, lo, God had not sent him; but he pronounced this prophecy against me: and Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *Sanballat and Tobiah.* See the last lesson.—*Geshem the Arabian.* "He might have been head of a clan that had settled in Samaria. Or he might have been commissioned by his tribe, still dwelling in their Arab homeland, to represent them in Samaria's opposition to the Jews" (*Davies*).

2. *In the plain of Ono.* Ono was near Lydda, twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. Nehemiah's enemies would get him some distance away from the city, where they might safely put him to death.—*They thought.* They purposed.

4. *They sent unto me four times after this sort.* Perhaps they thought that

however plain their purpose might be, Nehemiah might finally yield to importunity.

5. *An open letter.* Not sealed. Like our postal cards, it could be read by many before it reached the hands of the governor. It was probably a parchment roll.

6. *Nations.* The nearby nations that were in league with the Samaritans.—*Gashmu.* In verse 1 and elsewhere, *Geshem,* RVm.—*To rebel.* From the Persian rule.—*According to these words.* "This may be a technical expression equivalent to 'and so forth.'"

7. *To the king.* Artaxerxes, King of Persia.

9. *They all would have made us afraid.* By sending the open letter Sanballat hoped to dishearten many besides Nehemiah.—*O God, strengthen thou my hands.* Or, *I will strengthen my hands,* RVm. "He who is a rock with men, bows in lowly contrition in the presence of God" (*Meyer*).

10. *Who was shut up.* Shemaiah was evidently a priest. It is usually supposed that he was ceremonially unclean. Keil suggests that he had shut himself in his house to intimate to Nehemiah that he also felt his life in danger through the machinations of his enemies.—*Let us meet together in the house of God.* "This was probably the greatest trial of all. The sailor has more reason to dread the sunken reef than the rock-bound coast fringed with white surf" (*Meyer*).—*Within the temple.* It was contrary to law for anyone not a priest to enter the temple, Num. 18.7.—*In the night will they come to slay thee.* "It is plain that the common, everyday prophets had survived the Captivity, and were still practising divination much after the manner of heathen soothsayers, as their fathers had done before them from the time when a young farmer's son was sent to Samuel to learn the whereabouts of a lost team of asses" (*Adeney*).

11. *Being such as I.* Not a priest.—*Would go into the temple to save his life. Could go into the temple and live,* RVm.

12. *And, lo!* A sudden light dawned on Nehemiah.—*This prophecy.* In the night they will come to slay thee, verse 10.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

9. *O God, strengthen thou my hands.* The point of the conspirator's device is not to be found in the actual spreading of the dangerous rumor, but in the alarm to be suggested to Nehemiah by the thought that it was being spread. Nehemiah would know very well how much mischief is wrought by idle and quite groundless talk. The libel may be totally false, and yet it may be impossible for its victim to follow it up and clear his character in every nook and cranny to which it penetrates. A lie, like a weed, if it is not nipped in the bud, sheds seeds which every wind of gossip will spread far and wide, so that it soon becomes impossible to stamp it out. In their effort to frighten Nehemiah the conspirators suggested that the rumor would reach the king. They as much as hinted that they would undertake the business of reporting it themselves if he would not come to terms. Even Nehemiah could not but feel the force of their threat. He must have had occasion to witness many instances of the fatal consequences of royal displeasure. Could he rely on continuance of his master's favor now that he was far from the court, while lying tongues were trying to poison the ears of the king? Before first speaking of his project for helping his people, he had trembled at the risk he was about to incur; how then could he now learn with equanimity that a cruelly mendacious representation was being made to Artaxerxes? His sense of the gravity of the situation is seen in the way he met it. He indignantly repudiated the charge. He boldly asserted that it had been invented by the conspirators. To them he showed an unwavering front. But we are able to look behind the scenes. Heroic before men, he still knew his real human weakness. But he knew, too, that his strength was in God. According to his custom in every critical moment of his life, he resorted to prayer. *Walter F. Adeney,* in *The Book of Nehemiah.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

1. *The doors in the gates.* In the Assyrian Room of the British Museum are

to be seen the bronze coverings of gates found by Mr. Rassam at Balawa in 1879, and the pivots on which these gates turned. *Dr. Ryle,* in *Cambridge Bible.*

5. *An open letter in his hand.* In Persia, as also in some other Oriental lands, when letters are sent to persons of distinction they are generally rolled up in a scroll and inclosed in a bag or purse, which is sometimes made of very elegant and costly material. The end of the purse is tied, closed over with clay or wax, and then sealed. This is considered a mark of respect, and a recognition of the rank or position of the person to whom it is sent. When sent to inferiors or to persons whom the writer wishes to treat with contempt, the letters are uninclosed. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Manners.*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, an additional source of trouble occurred among the community within the city. The common people who were freely giving their time for the work could not attend to their fields, and the season was against them, too. They had mortgaged house and lands and even had pledged their children, and when the taxes became due they had not wherewith to pay them. Nehemiah learned the situation and rebuked the greed of the capitalists, cited his own case as an example; for not only was he renouncing the dues to which he was entitled as governor but he was giving the services of his own bodyguard, and he persuaded the creditors to remit the twelve per cent. interest and even to cancel the mortgages. In spite of all difficulties, work on the wall progressed rapidly till all the breaches were filled, and the walls had arisen to their intended height. The doors were yet to be hung in the gateways, but there was no chance for the enemies to make a successful attack. Therefore they changed their tactics, and thought to accomplish by fraud what they could not hope to do by force.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The plain of Ono, where Nehemiah's adversaries would have him meet them, was somewhere in the Plain of Sharon, probably in the neighborhood of Lydda, since it is named with that city in 1 Ch. 8.32 and again in Neh. 11.35. It must have been over twenty-five miles from Jerusalem.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Tell your pupils that you have a true story for them. (Adapted from "Maid Margery's Laugh and the Chinese Mob," by E. A. Taylor in *Sunday School Times.*) In a missionary's home in China one day at noon (1894), two little children, a boy and a girl, two years old, were alone with their mothers, for their fathers, the missionaries, were being kept away. A mob of Chinese came to the house intending to steal everything and kill every one there, for they hated the missionaries and their work. They broke down the gate and rushed yelling into the house, armed with heavy sticks and sharp knives. Hardly knowing why, the mothers set the two babies side by side on a small table against the wall, and stood beside them as the mob of men rushed in. And what do you suppose the little girl did? She jumped to her feet and raising her clasped hands to her forehead, bowed her plump little body till her forehead bumped the table, and spoke in Chinese the words that every Chinese child is taught to speak to older people on meeting them. The little boy got up and did just as Margery did. The men were so surprised that they stood still for a moment. Then one man hurled to the floor the cups and vases that stood near by, and as the china fell Margery burst into a peal of laughter. "Little foreign devil," one of the men screamed, and threw a brick at her head. It struck the wall only an inch to one side of her, and fell broken on the table. Margery only clapped her hands and commanded in Chinese, "Do it again, nice noise; make some more." That was too much for those men; they could not strike her, as she stood there laughing at them, and slowly they began to smile themselves, and then they brought everything they could find in the house to the table where she sat, and they smashed the china and furniture, tore up the cloth and

cut up the books, while Margery laughed and said, "Nice noise." And then, when at last there was nothing more to destroy, they gravely bowed to her and left, without trying to harm the children or their mothers. Don't you think God was helping them?

Little Margery was brave because she knew no fear. You have another true story for your pupils about a man who was brave because he was doing a great work that it was his duty to do and he trusted God to help him finish it, although there were men who hated him and who tried to put a stop to the work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Every year at Yale University before the foot-ball squad goes out for practice, they have an impressive ceremony. The young athletes are all gathered in a circle in the dressing-rooms and a picture of Hinkey, the famous Yale end rush, is passed from one to the other. Not a word is spoken. They all look at the photograph and think. This photograph shows Hinkey's distorted face as it was snapped by the camera when he was preparing to hurl himself against an opposing line. The photo plainly teaches "never say die," never give up, be determined to overcome all opposition.

To-day we have before us the photograph of an equally determined man—a man of wonderful courage and resolution, who could never say die when he had a duty to perform.

For Older Pupils. What is self-respect? How does it differ from vanity? (Vanity over-estimates self on superficial or accidental grounds.) How do self-respect and self-conceit differ? How is self-respect distinguished from pride? ("Pride is looking down upon our neighbors, self-respect is looking up to one's self.") What is the difference between being selfish and being true to one's self? May one who is humble have self-respect? Nehemiah was one of the great self-respecting men. As we study his example, we shall see how noble a quality is self-respect.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I I am doing a Great Work; I cannot come

Nehemiah's Answer. Four times Sanballat and Geshem sent an urgent request to Nehemiah to have him meet them for a conference on the plain of Ono. That their object was to do him mischief, as he says, seemed plain. Of course Nehemiah could not be so easily duped, but what a grand answer was his: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease (as it would undoubtedly without his directing, impelling power), while I leave it, and come down to you?" His answer would have been the same had the invitation been for pleasure or for his own advantage in any way. The greatness, the overwhelming importance of his work, the priority of its demands to all things else, filled his mind and heart. Oh for the same sense of the greatness of work, however seemingly humble, done for God to-day! Oh for a realization of the sense of satisfaction that comes from duty—doing!

The Courage of Consecration to Duty. Nehemiah stood in the path of duty, and therefore in the very line of God's will, and he would not budge one inch. Luther showed the same courage when the Elector wrote to him before the Diet of Worms, reminding him that John Huss had been burnt at the Council of Constance, although he also possessed a safe-conduct. Luther replied that he would go to Worms if there were as many devils as tiles on the roof. He knew well that the chances were he was going to his death; but he also knew that he was obeying conscience and obeying the truth by going. Like Nehemiah, he was sustained by the thought of duty, by the sense of responsibility as leader of a great movement, and by a resolute faith in God.

Courage of a sort is common enough; but this courage is rare, this steadfastness of heart, this unmovable adherence to duty, which turns an obstinate face to temptation, whether it come in the form of allurement or in the form of threat. Yet without it a strong character cannot possibly be formed. If we

made more of duty, and took the burden humbly on our shoulders, we should be strengthened by the very bearing of the burden to endure it. A sense of duty to God will save a man from weakness, will breed in him the iron nerve and steadfast courage and the endurance which is the crowning quality of great hearts. Unless there be in a man's life a sense of duty which makes certain things necessary, things that he ought to do and must do, and certain things that he must refuse and will refuse at all costs, how can he escape being weak and wavering? Condensed from a chapter in *Listening to God,* by *Hugh Black.*

Duty before Pleasure. When Mr. Roosevelt was Police Commissioner of New York, Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin gave their famous ball. It was realized that there would be a great crowd outside the house that night, and that it would be hard for the police to keep the passage clear for carriages. A few days before the event Mrs. Martin chanced to meet the Police Commissioner. "Of course you are coming to my ball," she remarked. "Mrs. Roosevelt will be there, and I will not be far away," he answered. "I shall be out in the street in front of the house directing the police." It was in the street that Mr. Roosevelt felt his work lay that night, and there he was as busy as any patrolman with the surging crowd, making it possible for the guests to alight from their carriages and enter the beautiful mansion.

Duty before Safety. When, in 1865, the cholera broke out in Paris, among those who offered their services for the terrible conflict was Louis Pasteur, then professor in the École des Beaux-Arts, and already famous in the scientific world. With two assistants, Pasteur established himself in the attic of one of the hospitals above the cholera ward, and there carried on his experiments with the disease.

One day a friend spoke to him of the work that he was doing. "Experiments of that sort must require much courage," he said.

Pasteur's answer was in three words. "What about duty?" he asked, quietly. It was a grand answer, because the whole man stood behind the words. It was the test with which Pasteur met everything that life offered him; where duty called, no matter what the toil or danger or discomfort, the man obeyed. His genius he never counted his own; it was a gift to be held in trust for the world, and magnificently he fulfilled his trust. The world is his debtor not alone for his discoveries, but for his character.

One may not possess Pasteur's genius, but there is not one who cannot, if he will, meet life with his great question, "What about duty?" *Wellspring.*

Duty before all Else. When William Carey, the missionary, was asked by England, owing to his knowledge of India and its people, to be its minister to the court of Ava, he replied in the words of Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

When Griffith John, whom Dr. Campbell Morgan calls one of the great apostles, was asked in New York by the latter if he were not coming to see them in the old country he replied, "Oh, no; I've very little interest in the old country. I have had fifty years in China and I'm going back." "But don't you want to see Wales?" questioned Dr. Morgan. "No, I love China more. Wales is a beautiful memory, but I must live and die in China, and mix my dust with her dust." He was doing a great work there, and could not go.

The Beauty of Duty.

The longer on this earth we live,
And weigh the various qualities of men,
The more we feel the high, stern-featured beauty
Of plain devotedness to duty,
Steadfast and still, nor paid by, mortal praise.

James Russell Lowell.

II Self-Respect a Religious Virtue

Should Such a Man as I flee? Nehemiah, when urged by the priest Shemaiah to hide himself in the temple, promptly answered, "Should such a man as I flee?" He felt that the anointing oil of the Lord was upon him, He had called him to this great work, he could not leave his duty even though his life were at stake. It was not essential that he should live, but for him it was essential that he should not be ashamed of himself, become contemptible in his own eyes.

The Nature of Self-Respect. Self-respect may be defined as a true regard to the merit of our own personality—we respect ourselves for what we are in and by ourselves. It is the sense of individual worth. It has nothing to do with pedigree—it is not a question of having a grandfather; it has nothing to do with rank; it is not a question of clothes—your fine apparel reflects credit on your tailor, your milliner, not on you; it has nothing to do with wealth—Dives may be without it, Lazarus may possess it. It is that sense of personal dignity which will not permit us to do base things, for fear of losing caste in our own eyes.

Self-respect must spring from the consciousness that we have a great nature, and that we duly honor it. Revelation, by assuring us of the inherent essential greatness of our nature, supplies the first grand reason for human self-respect. As long as we act worthily we may all of us live with a lofty sense of our personal consequence. We may be obscure, unsuccessful, poor, afflicted, but we are still of royal lineage, the image of God in us.

But we must act worthily, otherwise the sense of having acted unworthily will fill us with shame and loathing. We say of a man who has been guilty of some fault or other, "He lowered himself, he let himself down." Yes, all sin is a lowering of ourselves. Should such a man as I lie, cheat, debauch myself with drink, stoop to folly, play the fool? Nehemiah would not commit sacrilege by fleeing into the temple to save his life; he felt that he was a temple himself, and that the indwelling, overshadowing Deity would preserve him. Remember that you are living temples, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you; honor yourselves, keep yourselves in holiness of thought and life. Self-respect will not permit the politician to change his coat for the sake of office; it will not permit the shopkeeper to lie for the sake of lucre; it will not permit the literary man to write below himself for the sake of popularity or peace. It makes the man the hero, the martyr. True to our own selves, we cannot be false to any man. Honor yourself, and you shall honor all men. Condensed from a chapter in *Noon Day Addresses,* by *W. L. Watkinson.*

A Case of Honor. Emily Wright, one of the last engaged stenographers in a large office, suddenly found herself dismissed. There were more workers than were needed during the summer months, and she was told that at the end of the week she should receive a good recommendation, but her services would be no longer wanted. "Have they fired you?" questioned the girl who sat next to her as she returned from the office where she had been summoned. "It's a shame! If I were you I wouldn't hurt myself with work this week, I know."

This had been Emily's first impulse—not indeed in retaliation, but from sheer heartsickness. But presently she pulled herself together. The *Youth's Companion* tells the story. "I'm paid for the week's work: I must give honorable service," she said to herself sternly. And so, because "honorable service" meant to her finishing her tasks regardless of time, she stayed beyond her hour several nights that week.

She was tempted to drop things at five o'clock as Ethel did—Ethel, who was to be kept on. In the mood of discouragement that was upon her the very dreariness of the office, emptied of all except one or two special workers, oppressed her. Yet she stayed, putting into exquisite order each day's work. It was Friday, while she was wearily typewriting some specifications, that she was startled by Mr. Davis' voice beside her:

"Miss Wright, what are you doing here?" "Finishing this work—it came in the last mail," Emily answered. "Are you not to leave Saturday?" "Yes," the girl answered briefly. The question seemed needlessly cruel. "Yet you are staying overtime?" Emily looked at him gravely. "My work is here until Saturday night," she said.

Mr. Davis' keen glance flashed from her face to her copy, perfect in each detail. "Miss Wright," he said, "I'm going to take the responsibility of asking you, for the company, to continue your services with us. We can better afford to lose a little in money than to lose one who so honors her trust—and herself."

Out in the summer evening Emily walked home with shining eyes. It was good—oh, so good!—to have the place, but underneath was something better—she had not failed herself.

III The Comfort of Prayer

Nehemiah's Experience. Two Sundays ago we studied Nehemiah's prayer on learning of the sad condition of Jerusalem, and saw how beautiful and unselfish a prayer it was. Throughout the memoirs of Nehemiah we see how this hero leaned on God in all the troubles and crises of his life. When the king asks what his request was in regard to Jerusalem, after he has told him that its plight was the cause of his sadness, he writes, "So I prayed to the God of heaven," and then he finds courage to make known his request. When Tobiah ridicules the work of rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah takes this trouble to God in prayer: "Hear, O our God; for we are despised." He learns that his enemies are preparing to make an attack: "But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them." Sanballat sends the open letter accusing Nehemiah of rebellion against the king; he boldly answers his enemy, but he turns to God for his own comfort: "O God, strengthen Thou my hands!"

Christ's Experience.

I watch the Master take His way
Far up the mount, at break of day
'Mid nature's quietude to pray;
And as I seem to see Him there
I hear, with all my load of care,
"He calls thee to the mount of prayer." *John R. Clemens.*

What Your Experience may be. Prayers are to the soul what the dew of God is to the flowers of the field: the burning wind of the day may pass over them, and the stems droop and the colors fade, but when the dew steals down at evening, they will revive. Why should not that gracious dew fall even now and always for all of us upon the fields of life? A life which has been from the first a life of prayer—a life which has thus from its earliest days looked up consciously to its Father and its God—will always be a happy life. For what we desire we ask, and what we ask we aim at, and what we aim at we shall attain. No one ever yet asked to be, as the days passed by, more and more noble and sweet and pure and heavenly-minded—no one ever yet prayed that the evil spirits of hatred and pride and passion and worldliness might be cast out of his soul—without his petition being granted and granted to the letter. And with all other gifts God then gives us His own self besides—He makes us know Him and love Him and live in Him. *Cannon Farrar,* in *The Silence and the Voices of God.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Mt. 10.16.

Nehemiah was building the wall about Jerusalem, but his sense of self-respect was a grander wall about himself. *W. L. Watkinson.*

If thou consider what thou art in thyself, thou wilt not care what men say of thee. *Thomas à Kempis.*

Self-respect, the vision of the soul in the light of God's thought. *Donald Sage Mackay.*

The work of our hands establish Thou it. Ps. 90.17.

I cannot understand how life can be lived without real communion with the Almighty. *Emperor William.*

It is not the men who run into the temple merely to save their lives whom we honor, but the men who enter it to consecrate on its altars the gifts and powers which they use for the service of God and the relief of man's estate. *Samuel Cox.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

We, too, will make it our aim to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for we know that our labor, whatever its nature, is not vain in the Lord.

Young men and young women need to think a little less of pleasure and a little more of duty. *Hugh Black.*

Should such a man as I, redeemed, sanctified, with the seal on my brow and the cross on my heart, flee from my corner of the battlefield? *Hugh Black.*

Said a young physician to Dr. W. J. Dawson, in telling him of an opportunity he had had of rapidly advancing in his calling if only he had made a slight modification in his principles of honor: "You see, I could not do it; I had to live with myself." You will have to live with yourself, always; do nothing that will dishonor that self.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

Very persistent were the enemies of the Jews in their determination to prevent the completion of the wall at Jerusalem. Finding they could not make good their boast and themselves accomplish the destruction of the work, they tried to stop it by getting rid of the one great man back of it, Nehemiah the governor. After the breaches in the wall had been closed but before the gates had been hung, Sanballat and Geshem sent messages to Nehemiah urging him to meet them in a village on the plain of Ono. Four times they sent, but each time Nehemiah answered: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?"

The attempt to gain a chance to take Nehemiah's life having failed, they next tried what influence a threat of loss of reputation would have with him. Sanballat sent him an open letter, that all could read before it reached him, telling him of a report that he and the Jews were building the wall because they purposed rebelling and of his having appointed prophets to proclaim himself king, and threatening to make this known to the king of Persia unless he would arbitrate with them. They wished to make him afraid so that the work should not be completed, Nehemiah declared, and boldly he sent back word that no such things had been done, that they had invented everything. And then he turned to God for help: "Strengthen Thou my hands," he implored.

As a last resort Tobiah and Sanballat sought to deprive Nehemiah of his influence by making him seem to his people a coward as well as a desecrater of the temple. They hired Shemaiah a prophet in Jerusalem to shut himself up in his house as though afraid of danger to his own life, and to urge Nehemiah to take refuge with him in the temple, for the enemies were coming that night to slay him, Shemaiah declared. "Should such a man as I flee?" indignantly questioned Nehemiah. "Who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." And Nehemiah clearly saw that this message had not come from God but from his enemies.

Despite all the efforts of the enemies and all the fears and weakness of the workers, the wall was brought to completion in the very short space of fifty-two days.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Blackmail. 2. Resourcefulness. 3. The force of personality.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. Read the account of the dedication of the wall, Neh. 12.27-43. 2. What had Nehemiah done about the government and peopling of the city of Jerusalem? (Neh. 7.1-4; 11.1-2.) 3. Were children present at the reading of the Law? 4. What festival was celebrated at this time? (Verses 4-18.) 5. How did the people show their reverence? 6. Why was the day called holy unto the Lord, verse 9? (Num. 29.1; 10.10; Lev. 23.24.) 7. What great things were accomplished in the century after the return from captivity? (Clipping, page 465.)

Questions to think about. 1. Do you ever dislike to read or study the Bible? 2. Is Bible study needed as much to-day as in the time we are studying? 3. In what shape was the Book of the Law? 4. Why did the people weep when they heard the Law read? 5. When before have we heard of sorrow caused by the reading of the Law? (Lesson V, 3d Quarter.) 6. Why did Nehemiah and Ezra stop the mourning? 7. Does one who becomes a Christian have to give up fun and pleasure? 8. Can it be a Christian duty to be happy?

Note-book Work. In your chapter about Nehemiah's Work, write Part III, The Man Devoted to Duty.

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 17

EZRA TEACHES THE LAW

Golden Text

**The law of the Lord is perfect,
converting the soul. Ps. 19.7.**

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Neh. 8.1-18. Ezra Teaches the Law. **T.** Neh. 9.1-38. The Confession and Covenant. **W.** Ps. 19.1-14. "The Law of the Lord is Perfect." **T.** Ps. 119.153-160. "The Sum of thy Word is Truth." **F.** Ps. 119.97-112. "Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet." **S.** Ps. 119.9-24. "Thy Word have I Laid up in my Heart." **S.** Col. 3.5-17. "Let the Word of Christ Dwell in you richly." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Neh. 8 PRINT vv. 1-12 COMMIT vv. 2, 3

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. 2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* unto the book of the law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbadanah, Zechariah, *and* Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place. 8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

1. *The broad place that was before the water gate.* "It is generally supposed that this broad place lay between the S. E. precincts of the temple and the eastern wall."—*Ezra the scribe.* See Ezra 7.1, 6, 11.—*The book of the law of Moses.* See 2 Ch. 34.15.

2. **Upon the first day of the seventh month.** The seventh month, Tishri,

is "the sacred month" of the Jews in which were celebrated the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Since the time of Alexander the Great it has been kept by Jews as their New Year's Day.

3. *From early morning.* Heb. *from the light,* RVm. During these six hours reading and instruction evidently alternated, verse 8.

4. *A pulpit.* Heb. *tower,* RVm.—*Which they had made for the purpose.* "Beneath the fresh fortification, probably, which would act as a sounding-board for the reader, large enough to hold Ezra and thirteen supporters" (*Maclaren*). —*Mattithiah...Meshullam.* Probably Levites.

5. *Opened the book.* Unrolled the roll.—*Above all the people.* On his pulpit or platform.—*All the people stood up.* In the synagogue services of Christ's day the people stood during the reading of the Law.

6. *Blessed Jehovah.* "In the modern synagogue prayers are offered when the Law is taken from its keeping place and when it is returned" (*Davies*).—*Amen.* So be it.—*With the lifting up of the hands.* Evidently with the palms upward in supplication for the divine gift.

8. *They read in the book.* In verse 3 we are told that Ezra read. Evidently Ezra began the reading, possibly did all the reading, and the Levites mentioned in the seventh verse probably repeated and explained the words to separate groups of people.—*Distinctly.* Or, *with an interpretation,* RVm.—*So that they understood.* Or, *and caused them to understand,* RVm.

9. *This day is holy.* Because it was new moon, and the day of the blowing of trumpets (Lev. 23.24), and also because of the reading of the Law.—*For the people wept.* Recall the effect on Josiah of the reading of the Law, Lesson V, 3d Quarter. The people had not known the requirements of the Law, and now they see their guilt.

10. *He.* Either Nehemiah or Ezra. —*Eat the fat and drink the sweet.* This was a proverbial expression for "Do not fast nor mourn."—*Send portions.* See Dt. 26.11-13; Esth. 9.19. —*Neither be ye grieved.* After penitence and pardon should come rejoicing.—*The joy of Jehovah.* Your joy in Jehovah.—*Strength. Stronghold,* RVm.

11. *Hold your peace, for the day is holy.* "It was ill-omened to make use of words or signs of lamentation on a holy day (Hab. 2.20)."

The Samaritan Book of the Law

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

9. *The priest the scribe.* Within the century which ended with the age of Nehemiah the teaching of Moses was established as the basis of the national life, and the first steps were taken towards the formation of a canon of Scripture. Jewish society was molded into a shape which succeeding centuries modified, but did not essentially change. During this period, the Judea of the days of our Lord came into being. Within this period the forces which opposed Christ, and the forces which rallied to His side had their origin. This century saw the rise of parties, which afterwards became sects, under the names of Pharisees and Sadducees. It laid the foundations of Rabbinism. It fixed the attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles. It put the priesthood on the way to supreme authority. It gave birth to the Samaritan schism. *After the Exile.*

9. *All the people wept when they heard the words of the law.* For the Jews in all ages, and for the world at large, the great event of this period is the adoption of the Law by the citizens of Jerusalem. We have come to the watershed of Hebrew history. Up to this part all the better teachers had been toiling painfully in their almost hopeless efforts to induce the Jews to accept the unique faith of Jehovah, with its lofty claims and its rigorous restraints. That faith itself, however, had appeared in three forms,—as a popular cult, often degraded to the level of the local religion of heathen neighbors; as a priestly tradition, exact and minute in its performances, but the secret of a caste; and as a subject of prophetic instruction, instinct with moral principles of righteousness and spiritual conceptions of God, but too large and free to be reached by a people of narrow views and low attainments. With the publication of the Law by Ezra the threefold condition ceased, and henceforth there was but one type of religion for the Jews.

In the solemn sealing of the covenant the citizens of Jerusalem—laity as well as priests—men, women, and children—all deliberately pledged themselves to worship Jehovah according to the Law. There is no evidence to show that they had ever done so before. The narrative bears every indication of novelty. The Law is read with curiosity; it is only understood after being carefully explained by experts; when its meaning is taken in, the effect is a shock of amazement bordering on despair. Clearly this is no collection of trite precepts known and practised by people from antiquity.

It might be remembered, on the other hand, that an analogous effect was produced by the spread of the Scriptures at the Reformation. The Law had its roots in the past. The venerated name of Moses is repeatedly appealed to when the Law is enforced. Ezra never appears as a Solon legislating for his people. Still neither is he a Justinian codifying a system of legislation already recognized and adopted. He stands between the two, as the introducer of a law hitherto unpractised. Condensed from *The Book of Ezra,* by *Walter F. Adeney.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

10. *Drink the sweet.* As we enter into a guest chamber, the first thing done to show us the welcome of the home is to present us with some sweetened water. In the cities they present one with a spoonful of very nicely flavored preserves, made of orange, lemon, or other highly perfumed blossoms, and strongly sweetened. Cold water is taken to wash it down. Very often where preserves are not on hand, honey is substituted. All this is to show the guest what sweet thoughts the home has towards him. *Gamahliel Wad-el-Ward,* in *Palestine through the Eyes of a Native.*

10. *Send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared.* This has generally been interpreted to mean that the wants of the poor were to be supplied; but Harmer prefers to refer it to the custom of sending a portion of a feast to those who cannot well come to it, especially to the relatives of those who give the feast, and to those in a state of mourning, who in their grief would make no preparation. In Nehemiah it may mean a mutual exchange of the good things provided for the feast. *James M. Freeman,* in *Bible Manners*

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Book of Nehemiah is composed of the memoirs of Nehemiah, written in the first person, and historical sections written in the third person, and its arrangement is not wholly chronological. In our lesson to-day we pass to the historical section.

There was great rejoicing when the wall about Jerusalem was finished. At the imposing dedication there was a procession of two great companies, one of them headed by Ezra and the other by Nehemiah. During the fortifying of Jerusalem we have heard nothing of Ezra. According to Ezra 7.9 he had gone to Jerusalem thirteen years earlier than Nehemiah. (See page 442.)

Nehemiah's chief concern after the fortifications of Jerusalem were restored was to organize the government of the city by appointing over it Hanani, his brother, and Hananiah the governor of the castle, to give it a large population

by bringing into it many who were living without (7.1-4; 11.1-2), and to register the people, comparing the first list of those who had returned with the people actually in the city.

Now that the city walls were rebuilt it was time to turn to the rebuilding of the people's lives. Chapters 8-10 tell of the adoption of the Law, the inauguration of that Judaism which we see in full force in New Testament times when religion was reduced to the keeping of rules and regulations. Now Ezra the priest and the scribe becomes the chief figure in the history.

The wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes; the Law was read on the first day of the seventh month, but the year is not given. The place where the great assembly met was the broad place before the water gate in the wall of Jerusalem. (This gate was so-called because through it water from a spring in the valley of the Kidron was carried to the temple.) The building of synagogues that we hear of in New Testament times where the Law could be read was a natural outcome of such assemblies.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Ye who have the care of little children, wisely counsels Dr. George Matheson, plant early in their hearts the thought that religion is a joy! Remember that the first plantings in the soul tend to keep their places for ever! Do not have them dream that God smiles when they are smitten or frowns when they are festive! Do not let them link His sabbaths with sadness or His church with chilliness or His prayers with pain! The lesson of to-day affords a fine opportunity for teaching that worship should be joyous, that God wants His children to be happy. The Lad's Lesson, page 469, is for your use.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. Very soon another year will be here. What shall we say to one another on New Year's Day? The people of Greece say this to one another, not alone on the first day of the year, but on every day. A Greek's usual greeting on meeting a friend, and his parting with him, too, is χαῖρε the imperative of the Greek word for *to rejoice,* or *to be glad.* Be joyful, it means, Rejoice, Cheer up! Such a greeting seems fitting for such sunny people as the Greeks naturally are, but up in the cold regions of Iceland they have a similar custom. The Icelander never says in his language, "Good morning," or "How do you do?" but he gives the same beautiful greeting that the Greek does, for he says, "Be happy."

Do we need to learn the lesson of being happy? Nehemiah thought that the Jews did in Jerusalem and he taught it to them. Let us see how it happened.

For Older Pupils. One day a company of Jews who live on an oasis in the heart of the Arabian desert came to a missionary at Cairo and said: "We have heard that at this shop the Holy Law may be bought, and we have come to purchase it." As the missionary was packing for them a supply of the Old Testament in Hebrew, he slipped into the package a Hebrew New Testament also, with a prayer that God would bless its use. A year later the men came again to the missionary with a letter from their aged rabbi. After saying how they valued the Law and the Prophets, the letter spoke of the other book of which they had never before heard. "With one mind we have come to the conclusion," so the rabbi wrote, "that He of whom we read in the holy words of the strange book is Israel's Messiah, and our prayers to the God of Israel shall go up evermore in the name of Messiah Jesus."

To the Jews dwelling at Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah the words of the Holy Law came as a strange book, and just as convincing were they as to their authority.

LESSON TOPICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I The Law of the Lord is Perfect

The Law of the Lord is Perfect. I often read the Bible. I like to read it every night. A Bible lies on a table at my bedside. I find the most beautiful

thoughts expressed in it. I cannot understand how it is that so many persons pay so little attention to the Holy Scriptures. Can anyone read the Gospels and other portions of the Bible without feeling convinced that the words contain a simple truth established on unquestionable facts? Whenever I have to make any decision, I ask myself what the Bible would teach me to do in that particular case. The Bible is to me the fountain from which I draw light and strength. In hours of sorrow and depression I seek consolation therein. *Emperor William.*

Converting the Soul. There is a legend that St. Anthony once preached a sermon to the fishes. We are told that the fishes swam up to hear him, and with their heads above the water listened to him very attentively, but after the sermon was over

"The pikes went on piking,
And the eels went on eeling,"

just as before.

Similar is the effect of much attentive listening to the word of the Law. Not so was it with Ezra's congregation that day before the water gate of Jerusalem. By their weeping they confessed and mourned over their sins of which the reading showed they had been guilty. And all the people said, Amen, Amen to the reading of it, thus agreeing to obey the Law in the future. The law of the Lord is perfect, says our Golden Text, and then it adds, converting (or restoring, RV) the soul.

The Precepts of the Lord are Right, Rejoicing the Heart. If people would but read the text of their Bible with heartier purpose of understanding it, instead of superstitiously, they would see that throughout the parts of the Psalms) which they are intended to make most perconally their own it is always the Law which is spoken of with chief joy. The Psalms respecting mercy are often sorrowful having in thought what it cost; but those respecting the Law are always full of delight. David cannot contain himself for joy in thinking of it—he is never weary of its praise: How I love Thy Law! it is my meditation all the day. Thy testimonies are my delight—my counsellors; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. *Ruskin,* in *Modern Painters.*

II Joyousness a Religious Virtue

The Joy which Strengthens. Nehemiah looks round on the multitude and sees a mass of downcast faces. He is afraid of the downcastness: he thinks this will sap their strength more than will any physical want. Accordingly, it is their depression that he blames. He says, in effect: "You are undermining your physical strength by your pessimism. A strong body is not built by a sad heart. The powerful frame is created by pleasant feelings. If you desire weight to your hand, keep your heart light. If you would avoid weary feet, keep your spirit on the wing. If you would be capable of the burden, keep your soul buoyant. Your force lies in your felicity; your strength in your joy." But observe, Nehemiah qualifies the statement. He does not say that every joy will make a man strong; his words are, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." And he is quite right in this limitation. The joy which strengthens must be unselfish joy. *George Matheson,* in *Rests by the River.*

Drink the Sweet. "Trouble is with Maria," said Grandma Pettit, "that she goes against Scripture and breaks one of the commandments."

"O Grandma, Maria doesn't steal or lie or murder, surely," exclaimed a shocked listener.

"I didn't say she did," was the decisive answer. "There are more than ten commandments. I was thinking of one my mother used to quote, one by the mouth of Nehemiah, not Moses. She used to say that those who did not have a good time in this world, disobeyed the commandment, "Drink the sweet!" There is something sweet at one time or another for everybody, and there's no need to go drinking a bitter cup the whole time. Sometimes the Lord does put it to the lips, and then people must 'take it with both hands and drink it;' they'll find comfort at the bottom of the cup. But to go exploring round as Maria does for all sorts of worriments, and tasting of every cup that looks a mite bitter, is what I don't believe in. 'Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet,' is what Nehemiah says, and after he had tasted plenty of bitter, too.

"But there does seem to be a great deal of bitter, after all," sighed one.

"Some folks hunt it up and drink it themselves when there's no need," said grandma significantly.

"'Poison not thy wine with bitter herbs when God hath made it sweet,'" quoted a hitherto silent listener.

Grandma Pettit looked up approvingly: "No, don't," she said. *The Well-spring.*

One Lad's Lesson. "Look here, young man!" the old gentleman said gravely scowling to the boy; "do you know what you've got down there?"—vaguely indicating the astonished child's interior. "No? Well, I'll tell you what you've got. You've got—not smiles, mind you! but real, simon-pure grins. You've got thousands and millions and trillions and oceans of grins. You've got the finest assortment of grins down there that ever I saw in my life! Yes, you have; there's a grin of most excellent appearance and quality near the left-hand corner of your mouth at this very minute—lying right in the middle of that little dimple. I can see it from here without my glasses. And if I wanted to—and if you wanted me to—I could pull it out. It wouldn't hurt a bit, either. What's the matter with you, any how?" he demanded fiercely. "Eh! I'll tell you what's the matter with you: Your grins are stuck! All you need is to have three or four extracted; and then they'll come easier, and after that you won't scowl so much, and you'll be all right." *Norman Duncan,* in *The Suitable Child.*

III Send Portions unto Him for Whom Nothing is Prepared

The Christmas Spirit. A week from to-morrow is Christmas, and all of us have long been busy in the pleasant task of making or selecting gifts for our friends; but have we something ready also for those for whom nothing is prepared?

"That plenty but reproaches me
Which leaves my neighbor bare.
Not wholly glad my heart can be
While his is bowed with care."

Surely he who has the true spirit of Christmas will not be content with making happy those whom he loves, but will reach out a giving hand to those who lack.

Every one knows Dickens' Christmas Carol with its picture of Schroogs, that rich, hard-hearted, tight-fisted, morose old man, whom nobody wanted to see, whom no beggar ventured to ask for a gift. He never thought of doing any good to any one; he lived only for himself. But he was visited by three ghosts—the ghost of the past, the ghost of the present, and the ghost of the future, and they taught him a lesson. He changed his ways, became a good master, a good friend, opened his heart, and his purse, and then he began to find a joy in living where once he had hated his life, and all because he learned to send portions to those for whom nothing was prepared.

The Poor send Portions to the Poor. Generosity is a marked trait among the poor, and they will not only give to those whom they see in want around them, but are greatly moved by such abstractions as the Heathen, the Homeless, or the Destitute. I had a chronic patient living with her daughter in two rooms in a little court running off a narrow street, and she gladly lent one of those rooms to a missioner who held services for those too weak, or too old, or too poor to attend elsewhere, and she kept it as bright and clean and attractive as she could. After she became confined to her bed, and in almost constant pain, she collected scraps of gay print and made three patchwork counterpanes, which she gave to the "Church Sisters" for the poor! *Miss Loane,* in *The Next Street but One.*

"Andrew Carnegie." It was the clerk of the courts who was responsible for the name. When he gave his name, "Andrea Arnegi," he said: "That is well enough in Italy, but in this country it is Andrew Carnegie." So on the papers it appeared—"Andrea Arnegi (Andrew Carnegie)."

America suited him first-rate, but his warmest thoughts were with the home-land. But although he fondly boasted that he was a Venetian, he was not slow to manifest a desire and ambition to be naturalized. Hence it was that

he took out his papers, and was given his new name. "Now," he said, "I am an American!" "Oh, no, ironmaster," said a friend, "you are a Scotchman!"

He said nothing in reply, but comprehending that by virtue of his nickname it was a sort of duty to come up to the attributes of Mr. Carnegie, he took pains to make inquiries about him. In every way he sought to obtain information about the multi-millionaire, and succeeded beyond question. After he had become familiar with the subject, he entertained one leading idea. Facetiously, and without any serious thought, he accustomed himself to say: "I had ought to be giving libraries! I must get myself diligent to give libraries!" Then he would laugh as only an Italian can, and declare that he was "onto his job to be a millionaire."

The Italian "missionario" is in the habit of holding meetings on the street corners, speaking and singing from a wagon. One September Sunday evening, among the auditors was Andrea, listening listlessly. The speaker used his vernacular. His text was, "Search the Scriptures," and he referred to the Bible as a "library of sixty-six books." Andrea's listlessness took on nerve force at this remark. As is the manner of his people, he did not express his thoughts, but he began to entertain them. He became a regular attendant at the mission.

One evening he went to the "missionario" and announced that in the second week in November he was to return to Italy to spend the winter in the homeland. Before he went he wanted to be baptized. The evidence of his conversion was excellent and the request was granted.

Eleven days later he left for New York on his return to Venice. Arriving in the city, he went to the Bible Society's store, and electrified the young woman who came to wait on him, by introducing himself. "This," he said, "is Andrew Carnegie." The young woman stared. He continued: "I want to give libraries, you know? Do you know? Andrew Carnegie gives libraries? Yes?" He was smiling then. "The Bible (you know?) is a library, yes?" "You want an Italian Bible?" the clerk asked. "Oh, yes," he said; "I want—How much is one Bible?"

She showed the different kinds and gave the prices. He selected one that cost ninety cents. Then he took from his purse a ten dollar bill. "That buys nine," he said, "and one dollar over." "Ten," she said, "and one dollar over; or eleven and ten cents over." "I want ten," he said, "and for the one dollar—How many San Marco (St. Mark) it buy?" "Fifty." "Ah! Ten libraries and fifty San Marco? Yes?" When the package was handed him, he observed: "This (you know?) is Andrew Carnegie! That, sure, is my name. I give ten libraries to the city of Venice, to those who need them! Fifty San Marco, too, some folks."

No happier man ever left the store. He went "home," gave away the Bibles to people unused to seeing them, and made good his nickname. In the spring he returned. This last fall he has gone "home" again, with fifty "libraries" to give out. Condensed from a story in *The Western Christian Advocate*, by *W. H. Morse.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. Ps. 119.54.
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice. *Paul.*
'Tis impious in a good man to be sad. *Edward Young.*
The doers of deeds are always hopeful and cheerful. *Rufus M. Jones.*

> I'll not confer with sorrow till to-morrow,
> But joy shall have its way this very day. *T. B. Aldrich.*

There is a noble conception of industry—to be industrious that you may have to give to him that needeth. *James Stalker.*

Religion is life inspired by heavenly love, and life is something fresh and cheerful and vigorous. *Lucy Larcom.*

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

He who does not intend to obey does not wish to know the Law. If we have no longing to know what the will of the Lord is, we may be very sure that we

prefer our own to His. If we desire to know it, we shall desire to understand the Book which contains so much of it. *Alexander Maclaren.*

The ears of the people were attentive when the Book of the Law was read. Are ours always when it is read in church or Sunday-school services? Do we have the same reverence for the Word of God that the Jews of old did?

Ruskin says that we may be sure, whatever we are doing, that we cannot be pleasing God if we are not happy ourselves.

In my preparations for keeping the coming birthday of Christ, I will not fail to get something for someone for whom nothing has been prepared.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

I. The Reading of the Law, 1-8.
II. The comforting of the People, 9-12.

On the first day of the seventh month, the time for the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, all the people, men, women and children, met in the broad place before the water gate of Jerusalem to hear the reading of the Book of the Law. A wooden pulpit high above the people had been erected for Ezra, the priest and scribe, and twelve others with him. As Ezra opened the book all the people stood up, and when he prayed they answered Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands and bowing their heads with their faces to the ground, as was their way of showing reverence. The words of the Law were read distinctly, and their meaning was explained by a company of Levites, and all the people listened attentively from early morning till mid-day.

"This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not nor weep," said Nehemiah and Ezra and the Levites, for the reading of the Law had convinced the people of their sins, and they were weeping in penitence. "Go your way," they continued," partake with joy of the food and drink prepared for this festival, and send portions to the poor who have nothing, for this day is holy unto our Lord, and in joy in the Lord is your strength." And all the people went their way and kept the festival with joy, rejoicing especially because they had heard and understood the words of the Law.

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was accomplished during the first century after the return from exile. 2. The beginning and growth of Judaism.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Questions to look up. 1. What do we know about the writer of Malachi? What does the name mean? (Clipping, page 40.) 2. What does the book itself indicate as to the date of its writing? (1.8.) 3. What was the purpose of the book? (Clipping, page 40. 4. What does Mark 1.2 say about the fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy in 3.1? 5. When did Jesus declare that John the Baptist was the promised "Messenger"? (Mt. 11.10.) 6. How was Israel entreated to return to the Lord in our lesson from Hosea? (Hos. 14.1, 2, 4.) 7. What was the law in regard to tithes? (Lev. 27.30-32; Num. 18.21-24.)

Questions to think about. 1. What does "from the days of your fathers" mean? 2. What storehouse is meant in verse 10? (Clipping, page 473.) 3. What does "your words have been stout against me" mean? 4. "Walked mournfully" is in contrast with what expression in the next verse? 5. What does "built up," verse 15, mean? 6. What was the subject of the "speaking one with another," verse 16? 7. What is meant by the "book of remembrance," verse 16? (Clipping, page 474.) 8. Compare verse 17 in the Revised and in King James' versions. 9. Do the wicked prosper to-day? 10. Are the righteous rewarded to-day? 11. What profit is there to-day in serving the Lord?

Note-book Work. In your Book of Israel, after the Exile write an account of The Teaching of the Law by Ezra.

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 24

MALACHI REBUKING AND ENCOURAGING JUDAH

Golden Text

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Mal. 3.7.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Mal. 3.1-4.3. Malachi Rebuking and Encouraging Judah. **T.** Mal. 1.1-14. The Lord's Love—Israel's Ingratitude. **W.** Mal. 2.1-17. Wearying the Lord with Words. **T.** Neh. 13.1-31. The Cleansing of Israel. **F.** Isaiah 43.14-28. Israel Weary of the Lord. **S.** Matt. 7.13-27. "By their Fruits ye shall Know them." **S.** James 1.12-27. "Be ye Doers of the Word, not Hearers only." *S. S. Editorial Association.*

LESSON TEXT Mal. 3.1-4.3 PRINT 3.7-18 COMMIT 3.16, 17

7 From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough *to receive it.* 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you happy: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts.

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, What have we spoken against thee? 14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts? 15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they tempt God, and escape.

16 Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, *even* mine own possession, in the day that I make; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

WORDS AND PHRASES EXPLAINED

7. *From the days of your fathers.* "From time immemorial."—*Mine ordinances.* The expression of My will.—*Return unto me.* Keep My ordinances.—*Wherein?* In what respects have we not obeyed Thee? The question is answered in verse 10. For the use of question and answer in Malachi, see page 40.

8. *Will a man rob God?* A question for the sake of emphasis, calling for an emphatic negative answer.—*Yet ye rob me.* As shown in 1.6-14.—*Tithes.* See Lev. 27.30-32; Num. 18.21-24.—*Offerings.* Heb. *heave-offerings,* RVm.

9. *Ye are cursed with the curse.* See verses 10-12.

10. *The whole tithe.* The Lord's full share.—*Storehouse.* There were storehouses connected with the temple, 2 Ch. 31.11, 12.—*Prove me.* Test me, see that I am the rewarder of the good.—*Open you the windows of heaven.* Give you abundance. It is natural to infer from verses 11 and 12 that the abundance thought of is of rain especially.

11. *The devourer.* "Literally, eater." The locust or any other insect, that ate their crops.

12. *A delightsome land.* See Isa. 62.4.

13. *Your words have been stout against me.* "Literally, *strong.* Compare the colloquial 'to be hard on a person.' Their words contain a serious accusation, which casts reflections on the character of Jehovah" (*Eiselen*).

14. *Vain.* Futile, useless.—*What profit...charge?* Isa. 58.3; Ps. 73.13.—*Mournfully.* Or, *in mourning apparel,* RVm. They contrast their humble attitude with that of the proud, next verse. "When religion becomes a mere mourning apparel, put on for the sake of profit, there is nothing in it to create joy and strength" (*Jordan*).

15. *Built* up. They prosper, despite their wickedness. See Jer. 12.16, 17.—*Tempt.* Challenge. Isa. 5.18, 19.

16. *Then they that feared Jehovah.* "The more the ungodly spake against God (verses 14, 15), the more these spake among themselves for God" (*Pusey*). —*They spake one with another.* "Nourishing their faith by believing speech with the like-minded."—*A book of remembrance.* See Light from Oriental Life.—*Thought upon.* Reverenced.

17. *Even mine own possession, in the day that I make.* For the change from the translation in the AV—in that day when I make up my jewels—see below. See Dt. 7.6; 14.2; 26.18. The day is that of 3.1.

18. *Then.* In that day of verse 17.—*Ye.* You who have been complaining, verses 13-15 and 2.17, because of the prosperity of the wicked—*Return and discern.* See 2 Cor. 5.10.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS FROM HELPFUL WRITERS

10. *The storehouse.* This may have been the "great chamber" or "lean-to" surrounding the second temple on three sides, and consisting of three stories, each containing several rooms, which had been perverted from its original purpose as a receptacle of the tithes and offerings, and assigned by the high-priest to Tobiah, but which Nehemiah had restored to its proper use again (Neh. 10.38; 13.5-9, 12, 13). It is not improbable that the "chambers," which abutted to the height of three stories on the walls of Solomon's temple, were intended in like manner for storehouses (1 K. 6.5, 6). In the great Reformation under Hezekiah such chambers were "prepared," either built or restored, in some part of the temple area, to receive the enormous influx of tithes and offerings (2 Ch. 31.11, 12). *Perowne.*

12. *All nations shall call you happy.* How wonderful the history of Israel—victor with God! First a band of westward emigrants, then a horde of escaped slaves, then a host of conquering warriors out of the desert; then crushed and ground into captivity; thence, after seventy years, to return with songs and outburst of poetry, prophecy, and wisdom; then, after flowering in the Messiah, withered and dead down to the roots; then all that was visible crushed and ground under Rome's world empire, and scattered as dust to the winds,—that is the story of the Hebrew people. And yet Israel's gift to the world is unique, deathless, unmatched in value. Out of Israel came the moral law, prophecy, the eternal word, the teacher of nations, the Savior of mankind, our Exemplar and inspiration, the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. *Wm. Elliot Griffis,* in *The Mission of Little Countries.*

17. *They shall be mine, even mine own possession, in the day that I make.* They shall be mine in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure (*segullah*). There are very few alterations in the Revised Version which give us a keener pang than this one. The time-worn phrase 'When I make up my jewels' has been so precious it seems almost sacrilege to touch it. But, except for the hallowed associations of the Authorized Version, the Revised Version is equally precious. The word *segullah* is one of the most endearing terms in the Hebrew language. Its *locus classicus* is to be found in 1 Ch. 29.3, where we find that David had prepared for the temple three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of silver; but over and above this, David had a *segullah,* a private treasure of his own of gold and silver, and this he was willing to dedicate for the same purpose. That part of a man's possessions, then, which he values most of all is his *segullah.* The word occurs in Ex. 19.5: "If ye will

obey...ye shall be to Me a *segullah* above all peoples," Deut. 7.6, "Jehovah has chosen thee to be a *segullah* to Himself," and in the passage before us, the Lord says, "In the day that I do make—that day, "the day of the Lord," "the unique day" so often mentioned in the prophets—"they shall be mine, a peculiar treasure." *J. F. Marshall,* in *Expository Times.*

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

16. *A book of remembrance.* You remember that when Mordecai revealed the plot against the life of King Ahasuerus, his service was recorded, and later, when the book, or rather roll was read by the king, Mordecai was rewarded by that triumphal procession which Haman was forced to prepare for him. A special roll was kept at the Persian court on which the names of "royal benefactors" were recorded, and their good deeds were always rewarded. "It is a mistake, however, to suppose that they were always rewarded at once," Canon Rawlinson says: "Themistocles was inscribed on the list in B. C. 480, but did not obtain a reward till B. C. 465. Other benefactors waited for months, or perhaps years, before they were recompensed."

The prophet's conception of a book of remembrance being written before the Lord, that is, by His royal command, this very human picture, is a natural one from the custom of the Persian court, and well expresses his beautiful thought that no one who does the will of the Lord is forgotten by Him. The same figure is used in Ex. 17.14; 32.32; Dan. 7.10; Lk. 10.20; Rev. 20.12.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

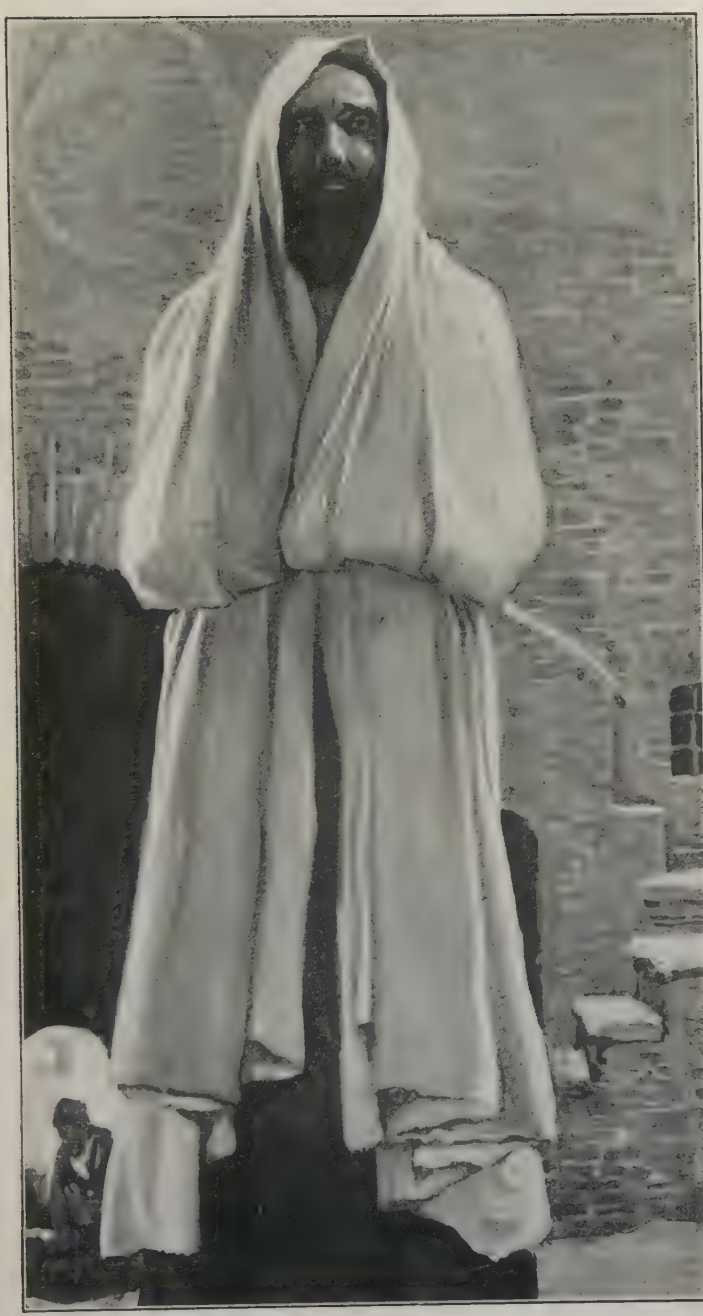
From the tenth verse of our lesson we know that the temple had been rebuilt, and therefore the prophecies recorded in the Book of Malachi must have been written after that event. The evils rebuked are the same as those with which Nehemiah and Ezra had to contend, and the prophecies were evidently uttered in connection with their reforms. Nehemiah had gone back to the Persian court and again returned to Jerusalem. The priests had become neglectful of their duties and the people were negligent in paying tithes and in keeping the Sabbath, and were guilty of oppressing the poor and of putting away their Jewish wives to marry heathen wives; moreover, they were thinking that right conduct did not "pay." The writer of Malachi gives them a needed rebuke. See page 40 of the Introduction.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF LITTLE FOLKS

Who has had a birthday lately? Did any one remember your birthday? How? Whose birthday do we keep to-morrow? After an introductory talk along this line, tell the story of the Christ-Child who came as a gift to all the world. Tell it as a story, true and simple. See Lesson III of next year's Guide. As you tell the story, show these pictures which can be purchased for a penny each: Bethlehem, Wilde, No. 175; Arrival at Bethlehem, Merson, Brown No. 730; The Nativity, Le Rolle, Union Press, No. 6; Plockhorst's Apparition to the Shepherds, Brown No. 822; Murillo's Adoration of the Shepherds, Brown No. 743; Following the Star, Tissot, N. T., No. 3; Interview with Herod, Tissot, N. T., No. 4; Adoration of the Magi, Hoffman, Wilde, No. 20.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING THE LESSON

For Younger Pupils. A famous English preacher was one morning preaching to all the Sunday-schools of his city, and the church was so crowded that one class had to sit on the pulpit stairs, and because no room could be found for three young boys they were taken into the pulpit. The minister began his sermon by comparing the Bible to a tree with sixty-six branches; each chapter in the book was a twig of some branch, he said, and each verse was a leaf of some twig. "My text is on the 39th branch, the 3d twig and the 17th leaf: try to find it for me," he said. Can any of you tell at once where it is? One of those three boys who were behind the preacher immediately stood up and said, "Malachi 3d and 17." "Right, my boy," said the preacher; "Now take my place and read it out." Then the lad read in a clear voice: "And they shall be



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MALACHI

mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." "Well done, my boy. I hope that one day you will be a minister," the preacher said. And he did become a great minister, and his name all the world knows to be Henry Drummond.

For Older Pupils. In our lessons next year we shall read much about the spirit of the Pharisees—that spirit which was so satisfied with itself, so ready to believe that religion was a matter of mere outward observance. We see that spirit in the germ in the people addressed by the writer of Malachi. As far as they knew, they were doing all that the Law required. When the prophet bade them return to God, what did he say they would answer?

LESSON THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

I Return unto Me and I will return unto you

But ye say, Wherein shall we return? There may be some sins which we do not know about, and yet we are conscious that our lives are not right with God. A friend of mine started to row one day, and he took hold of the oars and tried to move the boat. It would not go. He pulled harder and harder, and still the boat would not move. He jerked out one oar and tried to push the boat off. Still it would not leave the wharf. Finally he looked down and saw a rope holding the boat beneath the water. So it is here and there with people—some secret strand, it may be of pride, of indifference, of selfishness, is binding us to the shore. May we not with sincerity and earnestness offer this prayer: "Search me, O God"—there will then be searching indeed—"and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me—and then lead me in the way everlasting." *J. R. Mott,* in *Students and the Modern Missionary Crusade.*

The True Turning. Repentance is a true turning unto God whereby men, forsaking utterly their idolatry and wickedness, do with a lively faith embrace, love, and give themselves to all manner of good works, which by God's words they know to be acceptable unto Him. Now there be four parts of repentance: contrition, confession, faith, amendment of life. *Old English Homily.*

Return unto Me.

The year is past and over.
What has it done for thee?
Hast thou grown in love and each Christian grace?
Hast thou grown more meet for the heavenly place?
What may the record be?

The year is past and over.
Gone are its golden days
In the which to serve the dear Lord of love,
And to lay up treasure for realms above,
Winning the Master's praise.

The year is past and over.
Say, hast thou spent it well?
Hast thou lived each hour with a purpose true,
Hast thou done each task thou wast called to do?
What does the record tell?

The year is past and over,
Save but a breath for prayer:
For the tasks undone, for the evil wrought,
O Thou God of grace, is forgiveness sought.
Farewell, farewell, Old Year! *Robert M. Offord.*

II What Profit is it that we have kept His Charge?

They that work Wickedness are built up. Thus speak the people according to Malachi's argument. The way of the transgressor is hard: A wicked man cometh to shame: Wickedness overthroweth the sinner: The lamp of the wicked shall be put out: Evil pursueth sinners—says Proverbs.

Which is right, the proverb or the saying in Malachi's day? Is not wickedness in truth often built up? Professor Peabody answers: "If there be institutions or measures inconsistent with immutable rectitude, they are fostered only under the ban of a righteous God; they inwrap the germs of their own harvest of shame, disorder, vice and wretchedness; nay, their very prosperity is but the verdure and blossoming which shall mature the apples of Sodom." His words are but those of Zophar in the Book of Job:

> Knowest thou not this of old time,
> Since man was placed upon earth,
> That the triumphing of the wicked is short,
> And the joy of the godless but for a moment?

As the Rev. Hugh Black points out in "The Gift of Influence," it is the teaching of all our great dramatists and novelists that the wages of sin is death. "What studies in nemesis Shakespeare has given in King Richard III, in Macbeth, in all his great tragedies! Relentlessly, unerringly, he shows the disclosure of the wages of sin. In Richard III he gives a picture of the complete villain, panoplied against remorse, callous, cruel, selfish, an artist in crime, disavowing even the ordinary restraints of conscience. There seems no way to get at him, no way even to truly punish him, impenetrable in his utter callousness. And yet with matchless skill and keenest moral insight Shakespeare makes us feel, and in the climax of retribution represents Richard himself as feeling, that nemesis has been dogging him all his life, that his way has been a hard way and its end destruction."

Browning's Philosophy.

> It's wiser being good than bad;
> It's safer being meek than fierce;
> It's fitter being sane than mad.
> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever sheltered;
> That, after Last, returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, proved accurst.

Does it pay to serve God? "I have always been told that the heavenly Father takes care of His children, but it does not look like it," said George Mansfield to his friend Lyman Burton. "I have seen too many cases where the wicked prospered and the righteous were poor, where the evil were happy and the good wretched. It does not look as if religion helps very much in this life, after all."

"Of course I know the arguments," he hurried on, "about our not knowing what really is prosperity, and that health and money and comfort are not what they seem. But that kind of argument does not satisfy me. Take the case of old man Monroe, who lives down the creek here. If there was ever a good man, Monroe is one. He has always wanted to have money enough to educate his children, but he never has. He has prayed every day for years that Charley might get well, but he has not; he gets worse all the time. Last year the lightning killed one of his horses—he had only two. This spring the wind blew down his barn, and his cow was drowned in a freshet. I suppose they have enough to eat and wear, but that is all. How do you account for a case like that?"

"There was a time," said Burton, gravely, "when they did not have enough to eat and wear. They were hungry and cold most of the time for ten winters—the neighbors had to give them food. That was in the days before Monroe became a Christian. He was a bad man then, and could not hold a job, and wasted what little he did make. It seems very good to them to have a dry roof, three rooms, and plenty of good food out here where the air is clean and the world at peace. I have heard them thank God for it many times. Have you talked with him since the lightning killed his horse and the wind blew down the barn?"

"Yes," answered George. "Did he complain?" "No." "Was he out of

heart?" "No." "Did he speak bitterly of his fellow-men? Of luck? Of Providence?" "No." "Then you have your answer." Burton smiled thoughtfully. "I don't quite understand," said the young man.

"You see, George," Burton explained, gently, "you are looking in the wrong place. The spirit works inside instead of outside. When a man is born again, it is his spirit that is changed, and not the world outside. He has the same body and brain. It may be an inefficient body and an incapable brain; it may be a body cursed by heredity and weakened by habit, a brain undisciplined, untrained. The spirit will help him make the best of that body and brain, but it will not make them over for him. He will still be subject to disease and pain and failure as before. The world outside is not changed; there will still be storms and pestilence and famine. But his attitude toward it is changed. Instead of making his body and the world over so these difficulties may be removed, the spirit makes the real man—the inside man—over, so he can face them and conquer them by getting good out of them. When pain and misfortune come, they bring, instead of bitterness and despondency, sweetness of spirit and renewed faith.

"And to know this, that the spirit has been quickened into life that evil cannot quench nor disaster embitter, is to possess 'that peace which passeth understanding.'" *Youth's Companion.*

Do the Wicked tempt God and escape? Have we never said something like this when we look around us in the world and see how wickedness sometimes thrives, and has sumptuous fare, and sits in high places? The distress of it is, not simply that wickedness is so skilful and adroit that it eludes punishment, but that oftentimes it is the very path and instrument by which success is achieved. The good man has scruples which tie his hands before an opportunity on which a man of easy conscience without hesitation leaps, and rides gaily along the highway to wealth and power.

Let us study the laws of things. God rules on this earth as well as in heaven. He rewards every man according to his work. If we work for wealth, eagerly, tirelessly, if we organize our work well, and observe the laws which govern the making of money, we shall get wealth. But we must pay the price, and we must not expect any other thing than that which we purchase. It is not always a shameful price. The energy and skill and persistent purpose and plodding industry, which the world values so highly, and rewards so richly, are virtues which enter into the make-up of all manly character. That we have failed to win the world's prizes is not necessarily a proof of our goodness. It may be simply a proof of our feebleness.

But it is a mistake to imagine that wickedness only can thrive on this earth. In the long run this secular life recognizes goodness, brings out its fairest crowns for its brows, pays it for its service with its richest coin. It may not be wealth or official honors; but surely the love and respect and gratitude of men count for something in the estimates of a prosperous life. These, however, are not the rewards of righteousness, even on this earth. The men who have toiled for righteousness the most keenly were not working for that. It was the sharp hunger in their soul that kept them at their arduous toil. And the moral power into which they grew was itself its own reward. They were content. They carried in their souls an ineffable peace, a vision of things invisible, a grasp of things eternal, which lifted them above the world and cheapened its treasures and its honors. Condensed from *Interpretations of Life and Religion,* by *Walton W. Battershall.*

III Christmas Lesson The Promised Messiah

Malachi's Prophecy. Throughout this year's course of study we have seen how the writers of the Old Testament were preparing the way for the teaching of Jesus the Christ. They plowed the ground that there might be soil ready for the great Sower. We have seen, too, how they prepared the world to expect His coming. Just as a friend may tell us about some one whom we do not know and show us his picture till we are prepared to recognize him when at last we meet him, so the prophets had spoken about the Messiah and had given glimpses of Him till Andrew could well say to Peter, "We have found the Messiah."

Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. Thus our lesson begins. And a part of the last sentence of the Book of Malachi reads: Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. To those Jews who after the return from exile were in danger of drifting away from God, Malachi gave the promise of the coming day and connected it with the name of their great prophet Elijah. That it was a literal coming of Elijah which the prophet meant, is denied by the words of Jesus Himself when He says of John the Baptist, This is Elijah, that is to come. Just what the words of the prophecy of the coming day of the Lord meant to Malachi we may not know, but to us they mean a prophecy of the coming of Jesus the Christ.

To-morrow we celebrate the birthday of the promised Messiah, and though we postpone till four weeks hence the study of the circumstances connected with His birth, in our regular course for next year, it is fitting that we pass from a consideration of Malachi's words to that of their fulfilment.

The First Christmas.

Once a little baby lay
Cradled on the fragrant hay,
Long ago on Christmas;
Stranger bed a babe ne'er found,
Wondering cattle stood around,
Long ago on Christmas.

By the shining vision taught,
Shepherds for the Christ-Child sought
Long ago on Christmas.
Guided in a starlit way,
Wise men came their gifts to pay,
Long ago on Christmas.

And to-day the whole glad earth
Praises God for that Child's birth,
Long ago on Christmas;
For the Life, the Truth, the Way
Came to bless the earth that day,
Long ago on Christmas. *Emilie Poulsson.*

A Christmas Welcome. Suppose some gentle woman had met Joseph and Mary on that Wonderful Day, as they entered the town, and had said to them, "Our streets are full of homeless strangers. Come you and bide with me!" By that simple act of hospitality, her name would have been written high, high among the names of earth's happiest folk. "Blessed is she," we should have cried, "to whose home the Christmas joy first came!" But the women of the Judean town did not throw wide their doors and bring in the world's gratitude and love. So the Child was laid in a manger, and oblivion holds the names of all the women in Bethlehem who slept that night beneath the wings of wondering angels. Had they but known!

Year by year, for nineteen centuries the story of the night at Bethlehem has been told and retold. To-day no household in Christendom, in town or village or on distant prairie, can plead the ignorance in which Bethlehem then lay. If the door is shut on the Christ-Child to-day, it is not from lack of knowledge, but from churlishness or indifference.

The Christmas spirit speaks in many voices. The sprig of holly or the plum pudding, the tree laden with gifts or the cheer for the lonely—these are all the world's way of saying to the Mother and the Holy Child, "Abide with us!"

Barred out alike from cottage and palace and inn in Palestine, the Hope of the world renews His appeal each Christmas-tide to our modern Christian world. By the very pathos of the first Christmas, the heart is softened and prepared to give Him welcome. To-day there is no heralding angel or guiding star.

No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in. *Youth's Companion.*

SENTENCE SERMONS

Restore to God His due in tithe and time:
A tithe purloined cankers the whole estate. *George Herbert.*

Only when we recognize God's ownership of ourselves and consequently of all that we call "ours," do we give Him His due. *Alexander Maclaren.*

God's goodness hath been great to thee:
Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done. *Shakespeare.*

Crowns of glory ain't wore in this world, but it's my 'pinion that them that does the hard jobs here will stand a good chance of havin' extra bright ones when they get through. *Louisa M. Olcott.*

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. Jn. 3.16.

THE LESSON'S MEANINGS FOR US

When Mr. Micawber gave an I. O. U. for a debt he uttered a sigh of relief and exclaimed, "That's provided for!" The Jews who asked, "Wherein have we robbed God?" evidently had the same satisfaction in acknowledging their indebtedness to God without doing anything to redeem it. Are we like them?

God would grant His favor to His people if they would return to Him; it lay with themselves to accept or reject it. The choice is everyone's.

A Merry Christmas and many happy returns! May the prayer of every one of us be in the beautiful words added to the Episcopalian Book of Common Prayer at the last revision: O God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Thine only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive Him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold Him when He shall come to be our Judge; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

THE LESSON BRIEFLY TOLD

"From time immemorial you have broken My laws, but if you will turn about and keep them I will pardon you and grant you My favor," saith the Lord. But you say in answer, "In what way have we failed to keep Thy laws? Surely no one will rob God!" "Yet you have robbed Me," returns Jehovah. "Wherein?" "In tithes and offerings. You, and your whole nation, are suffering the penalty for having robbed Me. Bring the whole tithe that is due for the maintenance of My house, and see what a blessing shall be yours: the locusts shall not destroy your harvests nor shall the vine fail to yield for you its fruits. And all nations shall call you happy, a delightsome land."

"You have spoken harsh words against Me," the Lord further declares. "What have we said against Thee?" you question. "'There is no profit in serving God,' you say: 'What reward have we received for keeping His laws and for walking mournfully in His ways? The proud are the happy ones; yes, it's the wicked who prosper; they challenge God and escape.'"

Then those who feared the Lord encouraged one another, and their names were recorded in God's Book of Remembrance. "They shall be mine, even my own," saith the Lord. "In that day when I appear, I shall spare them: then you will discern the difference between the rewards of the righteous and of the wicked, of those who serve Me and of those who do not serve Me; for the wicked shall be destroyed, root and branch, while the righteous shall be exalted for ever."

SUBJECTS FOR BIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Systematic giving. 2. Wherein do we rob God to-day? 3. Messianic Prophecies.

WORK TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

In your book of Israel after the Exile, write an account of Malachi Rebuking and Encouraging Israel.

Assign whatever work you wish prepared for Review Sunday.

LESSON XIV—DECEMBER 31

REVIEW

Golden Text

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 Jn. 1.9.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS—**M.** Dan. 1.8-20. Daniel and his Companions. Dan. 3.1-30. Daniel's Companions in the Fiery Furnace. Dan. 6.1-28. Daniel in the Lion's Den. **T.** Ezek. 3.1-27. The Prophet Ezekiel a Watchman. Ezek. 47.1-12. The Life-Giving Stream. Ezra 1.1-11; 2.24-70. The Return from Captivity. **W.** Ezra 3.1-4.5. The Foundation of the Second Temple Laid. Ps. 85.1-13. A Psalm of Deliverance. **T.** Esth. 4.1-5.3. Esther Pleading for her People. Dan. 5.1-31. Belshazzar's Feast and Fate. **F.** Ezra 8.15-36. Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem. Neh. 1.1-11. Nehemiah's Prayer. **S.** Neh. 4.1-23. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem. **S.** Neh. 8.1-18. Ezra Teaches the Law. Mal. 3.1-4.3. Malachi Rebuking and Encouraging Judah. *S. S. Editorial Association.*

A BRIEF REVIEW FROM THE FALL OF JERUSALEM TO THE TIME OF MALACHI

Outlines for the Blackboard

XI Training, 1-7.
Trial, 8-16.
Triumph, 17-20.

XII Firmness, 13-18.
Furnace, 19-23.
Freedom, 24-28.

XIII Decree, 10-15.
Den, 16-18.
Deliverance, 19-23.

I Constrained, 12-14.
Concerned, 15.
Charged, 16-21.

II Start, 1-2.
Spread, 3-5.
Sequence, 6-12.

III Proclamation, 1-4.
Preparation, 5-6.
Presentation, 7-11.

IV Activities, 8-9.
Anthems, 10-13.
Adversaries, 1-5.

V Past, 1-3.
Present, 4-7.
Prospect, 8-13.

VI Reflection, 10-12.
Resolve, 13-17.
Result, 1-3.

VII Warned, 17-21.
Wicked, 22-23.
Weighed, 24-31.

VIII Faith, 21-23.
Forethought, 24-30.
Forward, 31-32.

IX Statements, 1-3.
Sorrow, 4.
Supplication, 5-11.

X Persecutions, 1-12.
Persuadings, 13-15.
Precautions, 16-18.

XI Treachery, 1-4.
Threat, 5-9.
Trickery, 10-12.

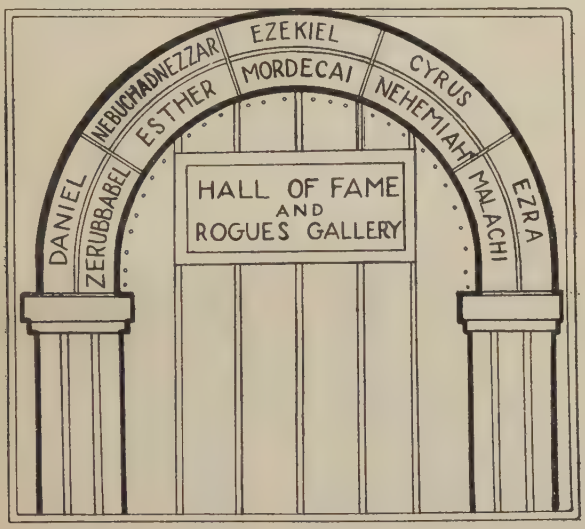
XII Reading, 1-8.
Repenting, 9.
Rejoicing, 10-12.

XIII Request, 7.
Rebuke, 8-15.
Reward, 16-18.

Assign a special lesson to sixteen pupils, asking each to be ready to give the story very briefly. In small classes assign two or more lessons to each pupil. See the 1st Quarterly Review, page 148. Before each lesson is told write its outline on the board.

REVIEW FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL

Have the outline of this diagram upon the blackboard and write in each name as a five-minute talk is given upon that character by a pupil or teacher appointed the week before.



A REVIEW FOR LITTLE FOLKS

Have the pictures on the next page copied upon your blackboard or upon cardboard large enough to be easily seen by all your class. Each square should be covered with its own square of paper fastened on by pins or thumb tack. Remove one paper at a time and question your pupils about the lesson which the picture recalls.

ANOTHER REVIEW FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PUPILS

What lesson in our year's study is recalled by the allusions in these selections? (For a written review, write several copies of each quotation on separate slips of paper and let your pupils each draw one. As soon as a pupil has written his answer, let him draw another. Announce next Sunday the one who has the most correct answers.)

He who shows me the achievements of a brother man touches my lips with a live coal from off the altar. *Carlyle.*

My lonely gourd is withered in an hour!
I droop, I faint beneath the scorching sun. *Charlotte Elliott.*

Why, my soul, sittest thou by the brook Cherith, when the wine of life is nigh at hand? *Thomas Champness.*

I have wept, I have fasted and prayed
To the great and the terrible God
For this city of mine that in ruin is laid
And my brethren who smart by His rod. *William Knox.*

I told them that the intellectual presentation of the lesson was not all, and that there must be the spiritual touch. They must not be content with laying the staff, however exquisitely carved, on the child's face; there must be the living contact. *F. B. Meyer.*

Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine
It shall serve thee and thy brother. *Mrs. Charles.*

·IF·WE·CONFESS·OVR·SINS·
PRAYER
To Nehemiah
THANKS GIVING
HE·IS·FAITHFVL·AND·JVST·TO·FORGIVE·VS·OVR·SINS

The sun is set; and in his latest beams
Yon little cloud of ashen gray and gold,
Slowly upon the amber air unrolled
The falling mantle of the Prophet seems. *Longfellow.*

Help us with the grace of courage, that we be none of us cast down when we sit lamenting amid the ruins of our happiness or our integrity; touch us with the fire of Thy altar, that we may be up and doing to rebuild our city. *R. L. Stevenson.*

Over her head the stars, the thoughts of God in the heavens,
Shone on the eyes of man, who had ceased to marvel and worship,
Save when a blazing comet was seen on the walls of that temple,
As if a hand had appeared and written upon them, "Upharsin." *Longfellow.*

On the road of life, one mile-stone more!
In the book of life, one leaf turned o'er. *Longfellow.*

Closed are the portals of their synagogue,
No Psalms of David now their silence break,
No rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake. *Longfellow.*

Men of to-day overeat themselves at dinners in comparison with which the feast of Belshazzar that evoked the prophetic warning was as nothing. *Tolstoy.*

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.
And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal!
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord. *Byron.*

Brighter than flaming chariot,
Stronger than fiery horse,
All heaven is marshaled on your side,
God and the universe. *H. N. Dunning.*

Why should one boy or one girl be content with a halting, half-way life, when the glorious Lord stands in His temple and points out to you the many ways in which special service may be given, and asks, in the hearing of you all, of you who have your lives yet in your hands, to give them or to keep them back: Whom shall I send, and who will go—for Me? *C. C. Hall.*

So many a hero walks unseen beside us,
Till comes the supreme stroke sent to divide us.
Then the Lord calls His own—like this man, even,
Carried, Elijah-like, fire-winged, to heaven.
Dinah Maria Muloch Craik.

There is no country so intoxicated with the sense of the spiritual forces around us as India—our pantheism has led to this—and don't you want to capture this land for Christ? *Lilevati Singh.*

Take heart, O soul of sorrow, and be strong!
There is One greater than the whole world's wrong.
No truth so few but He will give it crown,
No wrong so high but He will hurl it down. *Edwin Markham.*

Flow thou to every nation,
Nor in thy richness stay:
Stay not till all the lowly
Triumphant reach their home:
Stay not till all the holy
Proclaim, "The Lord is come!" *S. F. Smith.*

Be it flood or blood the path that's trod
All the same it leads home to God.
Be it furnace fire voluminous
One like God's son will walk with us. *Christina G. Rossetti.*

QUESTIONS FOR A WRITTEN REVIEW

For Younger Pupils. Copy these questions on separate slips of paper, as many of each as may be needed for your class. Let each pupil answer as many as he can in the time allowed.

1. What happened after Solomon's death? Why did it happen?
2. Name three of the best kings and two of the greatest prophets of Judah.
3. Name two of the worst kings and two prophets of Israel.
4. How did the Northern Kingdom end? Why?
5. How did the Southern Kingdom end? Why?
6. Name three men who had most to do with the return of the Jews from Babylon, and tell what each did.
7. Name the Historical Books of the Old Testament.
8. Why have we two books of Kings and two of Chronicles?
9. Name the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament.
10. Why are the last twelve called the Minor Prophets?
11. What is the longest prophetical Book?
12. What is the shortest prophetical Book?
13. What two books in the Old Testament are named after women?
14. What two great prophets have we studied about who did not leave any writings?
15. What two sulky persons have we seen in our year's lessons?
16. What proud persons?
17. What cruel persons?
18. What men of faith?
19. What men of prayer?
20. What men of zeal for God?

For Older Pupils.

1-6. Questions 1-6 for Younger Pupils.
7. Name the Historical Books of the Old Testament.
8. Why have we two books of Kings and two of Chronicles?
9. In what kingdom only is Chronicles interested?
10. What period is covered by each historical book studied this year?
11. Name the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament in the order printed.
12. Name the prophetical writers who lived in the last half of the 8th century.
13. Name the prophetical books in the general chronological order.
14. What is the longest prophetical book? The shortest?
15. What is the great missionary book of the Old Testament?
16. What are the teachings of the Book of Daniel?
17. Why is Esther a puzzling book?
18. What was the purpose of its writing?
19. What kings did Isaiah help?
20. Name some of the subjects of Isaiah's preaching.
21. What is the purpose of the Book of Hosea?
22. What is the theme of the Book of Micah?
23. What two great truths are taught by the Book of Jonah?
24. When did Jeremiah live?
25. What did Jeremiah preach about?
26. What prophets were religious heroes rather than preachers and writers?
27. What prophet taught that God and man are alike in their feelings?
28. What prophets taught that God is not always on the side of the great battalions?
29. What prophet talked about universal peace?
30. What prophet taught that God was preparing the nation for a divinely appointed mission?

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